

The University of Chicago
Libraries





WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

By

THE RIGHT REV. AND RIGHT HON.

ARTHUR F. WINNINGTON INGRAM, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

NEW YORK • LONDON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

The Knickerbocker Press

1929

Bx 5133
NEWG
1929

RECEIVED
TO
BIBLIOTHECA

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN ?



Copyright, 1929

by

G. P. Putnam's Sons

Published, Autumn, 1929



Made in the United States of America

FOREWORD

I AM very glad to commend this little book to the American Readers because I have a very vivid recollection of my talks—I can hardly call them lectures—to some twenty-two American Universities in the autumn of 1926.

Very often I used to take this same title as my subject: "Why am I a Christian?" and I think that quite possibly some of the young people, who came in such numbers to hear me, may like to have what I tried to say in a more permanent form.

At any rate this little book goes to America as a token of good-will and affectionate gratitude for the wonderful reception which I had there.

A. F. LONDON.

FULHAM PALACE,
July 24th, 1929.

PREFACE

It is now three years since the last Mission book, entitled *The Sword of Goliath*,¹ was brought out. I found that book very useful in America, as it formed the text-book of my lectures at many of the twenty-two Universities which I addressed in the subsequent year when I was asked by the Bishops of the Episcopal Church to give a Christian Appeal to the youth of America. But an even more fruitful subject for the lectures I found to be "Why am I a Christian?" So many of these students had been told to wait until they were nineteen years of age, and then "choose their religion," that there was great need of instruction in the very elementary reasons as to why they should be Christians at all. There was no good

¹ Published by Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 3 Paternoster Buildings, E.C.

PREFACE

wasting valuable time in pointing out the differences between being an Anglo-Catholic, an Evangelical, a Roman Catholic, a Baptist, a Wesleyan, or a Congregationalist, when there was a preliminary question to be answered, "Why be a Christian at all?"

Now, I do not think that many will deny that this state of mind is almost as common on this side of the Atlantic as upon the other. It is lamentable to think of the time we waste over the points on which we differ, instead of concentrating upon the things on which we agree. Anyhow, I attempted this Lent to give a connected course of sermons on Sundays, followed by simple instructions in the same church on Wednesdays, with a view to answering the question, "Why am I a Christian?" And in order to keep in touch with my congregations, I invited questions to be sent me after the Sunday sermon, and I answered them to the best of my ability on the Wednesday. Naturally these addresses and instructions, all spoken extempore, cannot have the polish or con-

PREFACE

ciseness of written lectures, but they may gain in "life" what they may lose in polish. At any rate, I have published them for what they are worth, especially hoping that they may be of use to the young minds which I have so recently addressed at Oxford and Cambridge and in the American Universities, and frankly giving leave to those hard-worked clergy and lay readers in Canada, British Columbia, Australia, and New Zealand to use them as they like. They told me that they greatly needed some such help as this book attempts to give. When sixty clergy were entertaining me at Vancouver, the man who proposed my health began as follows: "At last we see the man whose sermons we have preached for so many years!" And this was received with shouts of guilty laughter. But there need be no feeling of guilt in the matter at all. If those hard-pressed men can find nothing better (which I should have thought they might easily have done), I should consider it nothing but an honour if they repeated my simple message throughout the

PREFACE

British Empire. Nothing will bind us more closely together than a "fellowship in the Gospel," and a common devotion to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A. F. LONDON.

FULHAM PALACE,
St. John the Baptist's Day.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—THE WORD MADE FLESH . . .	3
II.—A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS . . .	23
III.—LIGHTING UP THE WORLD . . .	39
IV.—JESUS CHRIST THE WAY . . .	60
V.—THE WAY TO PRAY . . .	76
VI.—CHRIST AS THE TRUTH . . .	93
VII.—HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH . . .	107
VIII.—GLORYING IN THE CROSS . . .	129
IX.—WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE . . .	144
X.—CHRIST AS THE LIFE . . .	166
XI.—WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN? . . .	179

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

CHAPTER I

THE WORD MADE FLESH[†]

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—St. John i. 1, 14.

I WANT to take as our text for the opening service of the Mission in East London these majestic words from the Gospel of St. John. St. Paul has a great saying, one among many others, and it is this, that you can do nothing against the truth but for the truth, and that has been exemplified in a most striking way during the last fifty years

[†] Islington Parish Church. Islington is not in East London but is comprised in the Bishop of Stepney's district, and was therefore included in the Bishop's Mission there.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

in Europe. I suppose that never has the truth of the Gospel been more thoroughly examined and looked into, with all its proofs and documents, than during the last half-century. And what has been the result of it all? One thing is clear, that in this Gospel of St. John we are really reading and pondering upon the very thoughts of Jesus Christ Himself. There is an old saying that "I would rather err with Plato than be right with other people," and as regards the Gospel of St. John, speaking for myself, I will willingly run the risk of erring with Bishop Westcott or Bishop Gore. It is a wonderful help to thinking men to know that a man of Bishop Gore's learning should have come to the same conclusion as Bishop Westcott came to years ago—namely, that the Gospel of St. John was actually written by St. John himself. Even those who may not agree with their conclusion admit that it was written by someone who was intimately connected with Jesus Christ. As we read and study these wonderful words afresh on our knees, let us realize that we are actually

THE WORD MADE FLESH

reading the mind and entering into the heart of Jesus Christ Himself. There is, however, one caution. Sometimes, as the new commentary points out, it is a little difficult to know when the writer is giving expression to his own thoughts, or when he is quoting the actual words spoken, or whether he is paraphrasing. Still, as you read that last beautiful prayer you may feel that you are actually reading the very thoughts of Christ Himself.

There is also this important thing to bear in mind, that the original Gospel is a "miraculous" Gospel. There may be said to be two Christian religions in the world to-day. There is a version of it which admits that Jesus Christ was a good man and a great teacher, Who preached many beautiful sermons, the best one, of course, being what is known as the Sermon on the Mount, but goes on to teach that if you seek to put the principles of the Sermon on the Mount into practice, that is all that is necessary, and you need not worry much about sin and its problems. Speaking

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

for myself, and as one who as a young man passed through a long period of doubt, I could not possibly rest in such a Gospel as that; it is inconsistent. Our Lord said so much about Himself that it is impossible to regard Him simply as a man, and nothing more. He spoke of Himself as "the Bread of Life." He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No mere man could make such tremendous claims.

On the other hand, there is a Christian Gospel which is coming now to be seen to be the *original* Gospel. St. Mark's is universally held to be the earliest Gospel, and yet St. Mark's is more full of the miraculous than even the other Gospels. So again in the opening words of the Gospel of St. John we have these stupendous words, "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*" This clearly is a

THE WORD MADE FLESH

totally different gospel, and I am going to illustrate the difference, and to show the tremendous meaning which it has for us by dealing with it from four different points of view.

(1) Take, for instance, *the miracle of the Virgin Birth*. Many people disbelieve that to-day, and there are others who think it is unimportant. Naturally it is our duty as teachers of the Gospel to study all these great facts, and to weigh them very carefully. I think I have read nearly everything that has been said for and against the Virgin Birth, and I do say this, that if Jesus Christ was only a good man I certainly could not believe in the Virgin Birth; but believing, as I do, that after a long preparation, and as part of the original design of God from the beginning, the eternal Son of God came forth and was made flesh, and dwelt among us, I now believe that such a stupendous miracle as that demanded a supernatural birth. In fact, I should have been surprised if He had come to earth in any other way.

I know that you young people—and I am so

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

glad to see so many of you here—have to defend these things among your friends, and you are told about the silence of St. Mark, and the silence of St. John, and the silence of St. Paul, and you want to be prepared with an answer. But remember this: St. Mark only claimed to write an account of the *ministry* of our Lord. If I undertook to write a London life of Bishop Creighton, no one would expect me to deal with his birth and early years. St. John quite clearly and definitely wrote his Gospel to *supplement* the other three. Recently I wrote the preface to a supplementary Life of Bishop King. We did not include in that book the details that had been given in the first book which described his life. So St. John did not include in his Gospel what he considered had already been sufficiently told in the other three Gospels.

As for the silence of St. Paul, do you suppose that he did not know what St. Luke knew? St. Luke was his doctor, and was with him day after day, and they may often have spoken of the Virgin Birth of our Lord. These so-called silences

THE WORD MADE FLESH

of St. Mark and St. John and St. Paul, then, are really worth nothing at all as arguments. If you will study their writings you will find here and there little expressions which seem to show that they knew all about it, e.g. in St. Paul, "God sent forth His Son, *made of a woman*, made under the law," which though capable, of course, of describing a natural birth, is more appropriate to a supernatural one.

But some of you may say, But does it matter whether I believe in the Virgin Birth or not? Well, I should not think of excluding from the Communion a *layman* who felt a difficulty in believing in the Virgin Birth, but the teachers of the Church must be true to the teaching of the Church and of the Creed. That "He was born of a pure virgin," has been the teaching of the Church from the beginning. You say it does not matter. But I think of the young people to-day who are fighting with their passions. Is it nothing to have a new manhood created? The great entail of sin was broken by the birth of a second Adam.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

There is nothing, I believe, which helps the young man or woman in the midst of their struggle with the passions of life more than the realization that they can stretch out their hands and lay hold of the power that is theirs in Christ, and which has been brought to them through the Virgin-born.

“Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem’s home there was found no room
For Thy holy Nativity.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for Thee.”

That is a beautiful prayer, and it goes right to the heart of the matter.

(2) Secondly, we come on to what we call *the healing miracles*. If you study the thought of to-day, you will find that there are many who do not believe in any other miracles. In rather a patronizing way they say that they suppose that there is a certain amount of truth in the healing miracles because there are faith-healers to-day, and they regard Jesus Christ as the first of the great

THE WORD MADE FLESH

faith-healers of the world. But have they quite realized the immense difference? I am prepared to admit that the faith-healers have taught us great truths; that there is, for instance, a power of the will over the body, that the will to live has a great influence in reviving us. It is quite likely that our own beloved King, now happily recovering from his long illness, was greatly helped by his own will to live. I believe that the healing art is a sacred one, and that the doctors and nurses carry out one half of our Lord's work, while the clergy carry out the other half in their proclamation of the Gospel.

But when you have said all that, and when you have given due allowance to certain cures which can be verified as having been given in answer to prayer and the exercise of faith, to my mind it is absurd to mention them in the same breath with the works of healing wrought by Christ, Who *at one word* healed ten lepers, Who could heal the nobleman's son at a distance, and Who was often surrounded by those who crowded around Him

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

with their pains and sicknesses, and who went from His presence healed. On my world-tour I went to Japan, and visited a leper hospital with seventy-five lepers. That leper hospital was founded by a Christian lady thirty years ago, and it has done wonders. Until she went, nothing was done, and there were 200,000 lepers who were left to die. Now her splendid work is stirring the conscience of Japan, and they are building leper hospitals. We have offered to supply the Christian workers if they will provide the buildings. In that leper hospital I baptized eight lepers, and all the seventy-five lepers in that hospital attended the service. But it is not possible to get a leper cured completely under about five years, and even then a complete cure is rare. But here is One Who lived in our world, and *by one word cured ten lepers in a moment.*

Therefore these healing miracles are a great revelation. It is what we should expect from the Word of God, and they help us in our faith. It is a revelation to us of the character of God. He

THE WORD MADE FLESH

does not send deliberately pain and disease. Why they should come is still a mystery to us. But we do recognize this in the healing miracles of Jesus, that God is on the side of health and happiness. When we have a campaign against the slums, it is God Himself Who leads us; and, after all, it is the condition of life in these slums which fosters so many of these diseases. He is on our side when we set our faces against those things which make for unhappiness in human life. These miracles are a great revelation to us of the love and mercy of God. Let us cherish, then, this belief in Christ as working real miracles of healing.

(3) Thirdly, there are what are called *the nature miracles*. There are many who disbelieve in these. Christ never walked upon the sea, they say. He never could have fed five thousand people with a few loaves and fishes. Yet it is a striking thing that the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is the only one that is recorded by all the four evangelists. It is as if God foresaw the

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

difficulty that people would have in believing it, and therefore it is told us four times in the Gospel.

Now, this brings us right up against one of the great difficulties of the faith. I would advise you to buy and read a book by a hard-headed Aberdonian professor, a Presbyterian, entitled, *The Faith that Rebels*.¹ I lent it to a girl at Bournemouth ill with consumption, and I have lent it to-day to one who was too unwell to come to church. The great point that is driven home in that book is that instead of the miracles being obstacles to faith, they strengthen faith in the Gospel. It is the miraculous which is the integral part of the Gospel, because it gives us such a message of hope which would not be ours apart from the miracles. Nature is so often regarded as an iron mask which nothing can alter or move. But the writer of this book describes nature under the beautiful metaphor of a silken glove upon an Almighty hand.

¹ Professor Cairns.

THE WORD MADE FLESH

Now notice the point of that particular illustration. It does not mean for a moment that God disregards law, or that Christ when He came disregarded law, but He worked by a higher law than any which we know now. Think of the miracles we see to-day. I go to Savoy Hill, and I speak into a little box in quite a low voice, and my voice rings through Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Paris, and other places; I have received letters from all those countries. Now, that is a miracle. Twenty-five years ago it would have been thought impossible. But a higher law has been discovered which has made that miracle possible. It happens to-day, as we all know, and millions can bear witness to the miracle. Now, those who are opposing what they call nature miracles forget that our Lord had control of laws beyond the ones of which we know. After all, what we call the laws of nature are only observed uniformities in nature—that is, what we have observed to happen as a rule. Can we not believe that He by Whom all things were made has control of all things which He has made;

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that nature, instead of being an iron mask which fettered Him, is like a silken glove, through which He worked—in other words, that He was not fettered by nature at all?

Take an illustration which will appeal to the young men present. We are all watching what is going on in the Test Match in Australia. In one of those great matches the ball is struck and, by the law of nature, will fall to the earth; but there comes speeding along at full strength a young, active figure, and he catches the ball before it falls to the earth, and by the power of his will modifies, without breaking, the law of gravitation. Do you suppose that God would give this power to man, and not keep that power in His own hands? “The Lord sitteth above the water-floods: the Lord remaineth a King for ever”—that is the description of God by the Psalmist. “The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will give His people the blessing of peace.” Therefore this Lent we can kneel down and pray for anything, and may know that although we may not get the

THE WORD MADE FLESH

answer we want, God hears and answers in the way that is best for us.

(4) Now we come to the fourth miracle, on which the whole of our Christian faith really rests, that is, *the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Of course it is possible for anyone to say that the young man, the son of the widow, was not really dead, that the little daughter of Jairus was only in a swoon, and although it absolutely contradicts the only account we have, you may even persuade yourself that Lazarus was not dead. But it is quite impossible for anyone to say that Jesus Christ was not dead, because the blood and water which flowed from His side after it had been pierced by the Roman soldier clearly proved that He was dead. But what evidence, you ask, is there that He ever rose from the dead? Have you ever thought why it is that we gather for worship on a Sunday at all? Nothing whatever happened on the Sunday unless Jesus Christ rose from the dead. In the Communion Service we have the Body broken and the Blood shed, and that service

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

which is held to commemorate His passion has been going on for two thousand years. But it is a Eucharist, and has been celebrated for all these centuries with joy. Would Christians all these years have been celebrating a shameful death with joy if there had been no Resurrection? Or again, you remember the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were disheartened as they talked to one another. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," they said. But something happened which changed their despair into joy, and that was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I daresay some of you have read *The Risen Master*, by Dr. Latham, late Head of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He woke up the Christian world to understand what St. Peter and St. John really saw. We are told that they went to the tomb, and that when they saw they believed. What did they see? We are told that they saw the linen clothes lying exactly as they were, and the napkin which was about His head lying in a place by itself, and they

THE WORD MADE FLESH

realized that the Body had vanished through the clothes. It was that astonishing sight that made them believe. I know that the story of the Resurrection does differ in some details in the Gospels, and I rejoice in the fact. Stories that do not differ in details are generally made up. It is the little differences that occur which help to prove the genuineness of the Resurrection story.

I ask you, further, What started this victorious Church round the world? Surely not the sight of a dead Peasant on a cross Who disappointed all the hopes of His disciples; it can only have been the conviction that God raised Him from the dead, and that "by His death he has *destroyed death*, and by His rising to life again has restored to us everlasting life."¹ Oh, it does make a difference to believe in the Resurrection of Christ! I wonder whether you believe with all your hearts in the Risen Christ? If any of you are doubtful about it, try to lay the spectres of the mind, and fall at the feet of the Risen Christ and say with St. Thomas,

¹ Special Preface for Easter Day.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

“My Lord and my God.” If you come to think of it, the real miracle is, not that He rose, but that He died. If He was the Word of God, it was natural for the Psalmist to say, “Thou wilt not leave His soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption.” Of course not; therefore He rose, because He was the Lord of life.

I want you, then, to rest firmly on the old miraculous Gospel, not slipping away to any lesser one. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But to as many as received Him, He gave *the right* to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name.” Have we all received Him? That is the question. To receive Him means more than just believing. The devils believe, and tremble. To receive Him means to receive Him into our very hearts. There is a mysterious saying in St. John, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.” Some people confine that to the Holy Communion. But

THE WORD MADE FLESH

though it must include the Holy Communion it means far more than that. It means to receive by faith the life of Jesus Christ right into our hearts so that He lives in us and works through us. It means believing in His death as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. All sections of the Church, thank God, can join in singing:

“Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
And only look on us as found in Him;
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord.”

It means believing this, and it means emptying ourselves that Christ may dwell in us. Is there any room for Christ in your life? How much time do you give to prayer? How much time do you give to reading and studying your Bible? How regularly do you come to the Holy Communion and to church? It does not mean giving up being keen in your business or at your recreation, but it does mean Christ *ruling* your business life and your recreations and your home life. As many as

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name." It is that right I ask you to claim to-day.

CHAPTER II

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS¹

"Behold I shew you a mystery."—I Cor. xv. 51.

It is a very appropriate thing that I should begin the evening services of this Lenten Mission in Stepney Parish Church. Not only is it the old mother-church of East London, but it is connected with me by many personal ties. Some of you older ones may remember that when I was at Bethnal Green I used to come to this church every Easter Day and celebrate at the seven-o'clock Communion Service. I cherish very warm memories of dear Bishop Hoskyns, and was with him just before he died. So all through these forty years that I have been in London I have known and loved Stepney Parish Church.

I. I have come, not so much to preach to you,

¹ Stepney Parish Church.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

but to think out with you the mysteries of life. Just consider by what tremendous mysteries we are surrounded. I believe they are the cause of much of the indifference towards religion to-day, both here in East London and elsewhere.

(1) There is, first of all, the *mystery of life itself*. We none of us understand it. You have doubtless heard the old story regarding our ancestors and the missionaries who first came to them with the Gospel. An old chief pointed to a bird which had flown into the tent, and flew out again through the opposite opening and he said, "The soul of man is like that. If these missionaries can tell us where the soul comes from, and where it goes to, let us listen to the message that they bring." And the missionaries were allowed to speak. We are in that same position to-day. What is life? No one knows. Where does the soul come from? I love to believe with Wordsworth that—

"Not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory have we come
From God Who is our home."

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

There are people who tell us that the soul, like the body, comes through the father and mother. But do the father or mother leave any mark upon the children? Do we inherit character as well as temperament? These are some of the tremendous mysteries which surround life. All we do know is that you cannot produce life by itself. Life comes from life—that is all we know; and even that is being questioned to-day.

(2) Then we come to the *mystery of death*. I was kneeling the other day by the body of the Vicar of Fulham, who died practically through overwork. And as I knelt by his side shortly after his death I asked myself the question, What is the difference between my friend now and my friend of an hour or two ago? We say, "He is gone." But where has he gone to? Death itself is a mystery; and there is further the mystery why some are taken and others are left. Why, for instance, should three Bishops in the diocese of Chichester be taken in four months, and in the diocese of London, where we are no better men, one

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

in thirty years? That is a question you cannot answer.

(3) But there is something which comes between life and death; it is the *mystery of apparently undeserved suffering*. This is what makes more atheists than anything else. I often had to try to answer the questions on this in Victoria Park every Sunday afternoon when I was in East London. When I was in Australia two years ago there was a great drought, as a result of which six million sheep perished, and while I was there the floods were so heavy that fourteen people were drowned. In fact, I was almost drowned myself, for the water came up during the night to the windows of the carriage. One attack of locusts in twenty-four hours will destroy in South Africa the work of twelve months. There are those, some of your best friends it may be, who are suddenly smitten down with cancer. I know of one girl who has consumption, and the young fellow to whom she is engaged said to me, "I am standing by her, although I fear she will never live to marry

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

me." That sort of thing is happening every day. Yes, apparently undeserved suffering is a great mystery, and is hard to understand. As Mrs. Hamilton King writes in her beautiful poem, "The Sermon in Hospital"—

"We suffer; why we suffer; that is hid
With God's foreknowledge in the clouds of Heaven."

II. We must next notice the explanations that people have given in the past with regard to this dark mystery of suffering.

(1) *Some lay the blame on God.* When anything terrible happens unexpectedly, it is called in the law books an "act of God." When I was in Japan I saw where the houses had been thrown down the cliffs in a few moments during the great earthquake, and where the people who were saying good-bye to their friends before the ship sailed away for Vancouver were suddenly flung into the sea and hundreds were drowned. An accident like that would be called in the law books an "act of God." There is a terrible story by a well-known author in which he tells of a great hand

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

being stretched out from Heaven, and taking a child and putting it in front of an on-coming motor. Well, there are those who would tell us that such things are acts of God, that He arranges for them all to happen. You do not wonder that when an old farmer was told that Providence had burnt down his ricks, and taken his wife, and ruined his harvest, he said, "Ay, that Providence again; but thank God, there is *One above*, Who will be down on Him one of these days." That shows the mischief of mistaken explanations. But our Lord swept this explanation away in one brief sentence when He said, "It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

(2) Then there is another explanation of the suffering that is to be found in the world, and that is that *it is all man's fault*. It is quite true that if you could get rid of the drink, and the gambling, and the lust, and the slums (which are often due to human avarice), you would get rid of nine-tenths of the disease of the world. Nine-

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

tenths of the misery and unhappiness in the world to-day is due to human sin. But it is going too far to attribute all suffering to man's fault. The Jews for a long time held that view, as you will find very well expressed in our Lenten book *The Riddle of Life*, by the Bishop of Pretoria. It is a book that should be read by all.¹ The Bishop shows that the Jews held that view for some time. "Yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed beg their bread." But they gave that view up when they came back from the captivity. In the Book of Job we have a repudiation of this explanation. After Job had listened to the lectures of his friends, and all that they had to say, he protested that he was *not* being punished in exact proportion to his deserts. Our Lord, too, swept away this explanation, as He swept away the first, by saying, in answer to the question, "Suppose ye . . . that those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye

¹ *The Riddle of Life*, by the Bishop of Pretoria. Published by Longmans.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, *Nay.*" That silences that explanation for ever.

(3) Now, this brings me to the point, What light have we got in the darkness caused by these mysteries? A great prophet whom you have probably not heard of down here, named Von Hügel, says something which is going to be the keynote of this Mission. He says that in face of the mysteries of life, in face of the evil of the world, we are like people out on a dark night with *but one little candle in our hands*. Or, as Dean Church put it, "We are like children lost on a dark common at night without God." Now let us look at this one little candle, and face the fact that it is all we have. It is far better to face facts. That one little candle was put into our hands by the Child at Bethlehem, and it is the only candle there is in the world. I can say this, because I have been round the world, and have seen at close quarters the other religions of the world. They have certainly got no candle to light us on their way.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Think of the Confucianism of China. One beautiful sunny morning I was steaming from Hong Kong to Macao, which is the only Portuguese port in China, and I noticed that many little boats came very close across our bows. I said to the captain, "Why do they come so close to us, captain? It seems rather dangerous, doesn't it? We shall run them down." He replied, "They all think they are being pursued by the devil, and they believe that if they come near enough to us, we shall cut the devil off." There are millions in China who are living under this horrible superstition. There is no candle there. But how different were the Chinese Christians who entertained me in the evening! They were bright and happy; they had the candle with its bright ray, and they were afraid of no one.

In Japan Buddhism is the main religion. In the temples there there were beautifully executed images of Buddha. I looked to see whether the Buddhist religion had any hope, or any light to throw upon the mysteries of life, and I found that

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

it had absolutely none. It is a religion with a sad, weary creed. Certain aspects of its teaching have a softening influence: for instance, in its teaching of kindness to animals, and a gentle resignation to whatever happens; but there is no hope and no light in Buddhism. The poor lepers of Japan, two hundred thousand of them, as I described this morning in Islington, were left to die, until a Christian woman, with a candle in her hand, founded a leper hospital. There was a bright light on the faces of those lepers who attended Evening-song at the little church.

Think of India. I had not time to visit India, but I read a book written by a well-known Indian missionary, Stanley Jones, entitled *Christ at the Round Table*. Is there any light in Hinduism? Let the following story supply the answer to that question. Two young men were going to the bad. Then one became a Christian, and his life was changed. A priest of the Hindu religion was asked to do something for the other young man who was going to the bad, and the priest replied, "I think,

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

sir, if you were to teach him a few of your Christian prayers, and if you were to read him the lives of some of your Christian saints, you might be able to do something. I CAN DO NOTHING!" There was certainly no candle there.

Then there is the Mohammedan religion. To understand it, you must see it working in Mohàmedan countries, and not as it is preached from Woking in a Christianized form. If you could only see the degradation of women in Mohammedan countries, you would never think that there was a candle in that religion. Think of the Armenian Christian girls who have been rescued from the Turks; they have the marks of slavery branded on their foreheads. Do you suppose that there is a candle for women in Mohammedanism? Not one. Therefore I say there is no other candle in the world except the candle brought us at Bethlehem.

But what light does that little candle throw upon life? Why, it tells us, first of all, that *God cares*. There are those who declare that God does

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

not care at all. I used to have to face that in Victoria Park. The men used to say then, "Do you suppose He cares for us out-of-works?" (It was worse thirty years ago than it is now, for there was no insured relief.) "If He cared He would do something. He either cannot or will not do anything." But that candle which was given to us in the manger at Bethlehem gives us the answer that God does care.

"God from on high hath heard;
Let sighs and sorrows cease;
Lo! from the opening heaven descends
To man the promised peace."

How do we know He cares? Because He has been in the thick of it Himself. But there is no gospel of comfort for us in the thought that Christ was just a good man Who once came to this earth and went away again. There is no candle for us in that belief. But if He was the eternal Son of God Who came down into the thick of it, then you have a proof that God cares.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

But more than that, as you watch Christ at work you see that He hates all disease and suffering, and when He was upon earth He spent all His time in healing those who were afflicted. We do not understand why pain and sorrow should come, and the candle does not wholly show us; but the candle does reveal to us the character of God, that He is on our side in bringing happiness and healing to the world, and that He is on the side of those doctors who are seeking to find the cause and the cure of those diseases which bring so much suffering and sorrow to mankind. The candle also shows us how to bear adversity when it comes. There never was anyone more courageous than Jesus Christ. He fulfilled Browning's description of the brave man—

“One who never turned his back, but marched breast
forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed though right were worsted wrong
would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
sleep to wake.”

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

There is an old inscription on the grave of a sailor in Greece which is very inspiring:

“A shipwrecked mariner lost on this coast bids you
set sail,
For many a barque, when I was lost, weathered the
gale.”

There is a glorious note of courage there, even in those pagan days; but our candle shows us that this is the way in which we Christians are to meet trouble. Let us remember that bearing trial creates character. What God wants to create in us is *character*. We have been created in order that we may be made fit companions for God through all eternity, and this battling with adversity and temptation and difficulty strengthens character, and the victory over these things finally leads to happiness.

Then, last of all, this candle lights up the grave and the gate of death. The apostles when they went into the tomb realized that Christ had risen because the clothes were left as they were. The

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

empty tomb is part of the Gospel. We want a Gospel which has defeated death. What we want is the certainty that God has raised Jesus from the dead, that by His death Christ has destroyed death, and by His rising again He has restored to us everlasting life. And therefore the question I want to ask you is this, Have you got the candle alight in your heart, this candle of faith and hope and love? If the candle is not alight, then you are in the dark, and there is no other light in the world. I want you to think of that. Then there is a further question I would have you ask yourselves. If my candle is alight, is it lighting anyone else? Does my light so shine before men that they see my good works and glorify my Father which is in Heaven? Am I taking any steps whatever to spread that light in the darkness? Those are the questions that I would press home to your hearts. That candle lights up the meaning of life; it lights up the darkness of death; it throws a certain amount of light on suffering and pain, and enables us to bear the burdens of life bravely. It

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

gives us light enough to walk by, and what we cannot understand we must take on trust.

“Soon shall we read the mystery right
In the full sunshine of His smile.”

CHAPTER III

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD¹

I WANT you 'to meditate with me to-night. Some people seem to think that meditation is a very difficult thing, but it is simply thinking over a very delightful thought. We were thinking last Sunday of Jesus as the Light of the world. Think again of His own words, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Only one Who was divine could have made such a tremendous claim. It does not mean what some people would have us believe, that there never was any light before Christ's coming. In those early days there were people who were kind to their children. It was five hundred years before Christ

¹ Stepney Parish Church, Wednesday evening.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

came that Buddha appeared, and as a young man he set a great example of self-sacrifice, for he loved his home. Buddhism is, no doubt, a very melancholy religion; there is always a kind of dirge that goes up at the services at which I have been present, but, notwithstanding that, it had and has a softening influence upon people's minds. Any belief in another world, in something which is not material, brings a certain amount of help to people. Plato said some beautiful things in his day. The Jewish religion taught that there was one God. These were rays of the coming dawn all leading up to the full blaze of the sun at midday. There was always the hope that God would one day reveal Himself; and that full revelation of the glory and grace and truth of God was seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

This is all historically true. It would be a terrible thing if we were to look back for two thousand years and were to see no signs that Christ had lighted up the world at all. I remember when I used to speak in Bethnal Green I was much

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

helped by a very informative book entitled *Gesta Christi*, or *The Deeds of Christ*. The book showed in detail how Christ has already lighted up the world, and all the dark things in it. He revealed the character of God. You have no idea what people thought of God before Christ came. They used to think sometimes that He was "the jealous One." There was one famous man who threw his ring into the sea to appease the jealousy of God.

It was a wonderful revelation when Christ came and showed that God was love. It was then that "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared," and it lit up all the mysteries of life and of death. We understand now what life is. It is really the soul's probation-time on earth. We come from God; we go to God. Here we are, as it were, at school. It does not really matter whether we are poor people living in the East End of London, or whether we are well-to-do people living in the West End. It is only for a few years that we are here at all, and so long as we use our

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

probation-time properly, then all will be well. It is often true that those who are poor turn out to have far better and greater characters than those who enjoy all the advantages that life can bring them. We understand then the object of life. Life is the time of probation for the immortal soul. It is not that we are living here and happen to have immortal souls. It is that we are immortal souls, and we happen to be living here. We are just as much alive after death. Christ has lit up death and the grave.

I remember during the War, when I was at the front, the soldiers as they lay dying often used to ask me where they were going to, and I used to say, "If you die redeemed, you are going to Heaven, because the Son of God said, 'In My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you.' " On one occasion I was at a dressing-station in France, and one of your Stepney boys was carried in badly wounded. He used to attend one of the mission churches here in Stepney. And when he saw me, his face lit up.

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

I went up to him and put my arms round him and laid him down on the stretcher, and I said something kind and loving to him, and he said, "Why, you are my Bishop." I gave him my blessing, and the next day he died. Death is just the passing to a better life.

Christ has brought light and freedom to you women. Christianity has changed the whole status of women in the world. You have no idea how women are looked down upon in Moslem and heathen countries. But Christ has brought them salvation, and a holy respect for women has been created; but it is only in Christian countries that it exists to any extent. Christ has also thrown light upon work. Instead of slave labour, we all work now for wages. Christianity has also meant enlightenment, and in all parts of the world you find the Christian Church establishing schools. Further, you can trace the progress of Christianity through Europe by the hospitals that you see established as Christianity advances.

Christ, then, has thrown an immense light al-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

ready upon life, upon the character of God, upon death, upon the condition of women, upon work, upon education, and upon the healing art.

Now we come to the main point of the meditation: Is He still the light of our East-End life? I did not live in the East End of London for nine years without knowing something about it, and I would like to deal with five things which constitute our lives—ourselves, our homes, our work, our recreation, and our future.

(1) First, *ourselves*. I believe that what we want in East London to-day is to take Christ as the light of our own lives first of all. Is it not true that we are our own chief difficulties? If I were to ask you, What is the real obstacle in your way? I am sure you would say, It is myself, Bishop. I always mean to be good, and then suddenly I lose my temper; but I am sorry for it afterwards. We have to deal with our own lives all the time. Now, will you try to trust the light one day at a time? One of the best mottoes in life is, "Take one day at a time and trust the Holy

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

Spirit to see you through." I have it written up in my study. If you live one day at a time, you will always find light enough to walk by. Do not look on too far ahead. Do not be over-anxious about the morrow. The light of the one little candle will always show you the next step to take. If only you will do that, I am perfectly certain you will find wonderful comfort, and there will be a calm and serenity about your life.

(2) That brings me to the second point—*our homes*. You ought to thank God for your homes, although they may not be very rich homes. You ought to thank God that you live in a Christian country. When I was in Mohammedan countries I used to look into the so-called homes there. Some of the children did not know which mother they belonged to. Those who had been taken into our children's homes in Egypt used to reckon the date of their birth from the day they entered the home. But those who possess this one little candle, what an influence they may have in the home! I remember confirming a boy in Stepney Parish

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Church one Palm Sunday, and the next Palm Sunday his mother came, and she said, "My boy kept on saying to me, 'Why don't you be confirmed, Mother?'" That boy brought his mother into the Church. When I was at Bethnal Green I can remember a father saying to me, "I am not much of a church-goer myself, but my boy who does come to church, he is the best boy I have got." That is the kind of thing we want said in East London. You may be the only one in your family who goes to church, but you have got the candle, and you do not know what good that candle is going to do. If you will but set an example of unselfishness and humility and love, you will help to light other candles. You, by your influence, may change the whole outlook of your home by bringing into it the Spirit of Jesus.

(3) Then there is *our work*. I know that work can be very monotonous and unromantic, but you may change the whole tone of the workshop or factory. "Who sweeps a room for God's law makes that and the action fine," says George Herbert.

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

Pray every day before you go out to your work, and remember that you are working, not only for an earthly master, but for a Heavenly. You may glorify God in your work. You may help the one who is working by your side. It is astonishing the great influence that a good Christian can exercise. I was very much surprised during the War by a lady saying to me, "Do you know there is a man in charge of our Pensions Department who has changed the whole tone of the place, and he says that he knows you?" I made inquiries, and I found that he was a regular communicant at the services in Fulham. By living in touch with our Lord he had changed the whole tone of that office over which he had control.

(4) Then there is *our recreation*. The Church has been doing all it can to get proper recreation for the people of East London. One of my friends comes down every Monday night to work in one of your clubs in the parish. But remember that you must bring Christ into your recreation. Do not go anywhere which is likely to lower your

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

moral standard or stain your character. Do not read indecent books—there are many of them in London. Let the Light of the world illumine your recreation as well as your work.

(5) Lastly, there is *our future*. It is a terrible thing to look ahead and feel that death ends all things. As I have said, life is only a probation-time. It leads on to that fuller life in the other world, and then we shall see Christ and depart to be with Him, which is far better. It does change the whole aspect of the future if we have got something to look forward to. So hold firmly on to this one little candle. We had a great Church pageant at Fulham Palace, and we finished the pageant with the most wonderful torchlight procession that was ever seen in London. Five thousand people, each one bearing a light, marched round at night at the end of the pageant. What a picture of what might take place in London if each Christian would hold aloft his torch, and pass on the light, and so spread the Light of the world throughout the world!

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I want to answer these questions which have been sent in to me, and which bear on the sermon that was preached here on Sunday evening last.

Q. Does the Bishop agree that what may perhaps be called the Law of Contrast does shed a ray of light on the problem of suffering?

A. I agree that joy would be very much less if there were no sorrow; and we should very much less appreciate health if there were no such thing as disease. At the same time, I do not think the Law of Contrast does shed much light upon the problem of suffering. In Victoria Park there used to gather different people all giving different explanations, and there were among them the Theosophists. They contended that suffering was due to the fact that one man had sinned in some previous state of existence, and that the other man had not. That was not much comfort for the poor East-Enders, even if it had been true, and there was no proof that it was true.

Q. Does the Bishop hold that the meaning of the one little candle was for Von Hügel faith, hope and charity?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

A. There are a great many people who look on Von Hügel as one of the most helpful teachers of the world. He was the inspiration of the Bishop of Pretoria, who has written the Lenten book. He may have meant that faith, hope, and charity was the candle. But I do not believe myself that you are going to keep faith, hope, and charity in the world unless there is something on which people may take their stand, and that is the Christian faith. Take away the foundation of the Christian faith, and you will not get faith and hope and charity to blossom very long.

Q. Does the Bishop think that character and temperament can be divorced so that it is possible to say that temperament is inherited while character is not?

A. I believe myself that temperament and character are different things. There is a great discussion going on among the psychologists as to whether we do inherit the character of our parents or not. I believe that what the Apostle Paul says is true, that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man," and that when the temptation comes, God will make the way of escape. If I felt that there was anyone living in Stepney or Whitechapel who could not help being

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

bad, my faith in God would be very much shaken. People talk about infants being damned into the world. If that were true, then I say that it is most unjust, and my confidence would be very much shaken in the goodness of God. I believe that character is formed by working against an inherited temperament. I know of people whose parents were drunkards and yet they themselves are strong Temperance people. St. Paul himself we know had a fiery temperament. It is not too much to say that he found it very hard naturally to keep his temper. But, by the grace of God, he became one of the most humble of men. He said of himself, "I am the least of all saints." I do not know your temperament at all, but do not ever say, "I cannot help it. I was born like it. This is my family failing." If you find you have a difficult temperament, or an inherited tendency, that is all the more reason why you should pray harder that your character may be developed as you struggle against your difficulties.

Q. Does the Bishop agree that a great part of the success of any religion lies in the strength and unfathomableness of its mysteries—since all the world loves a riddle?

A. I agree that a religion without mystery would

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

not be worth having. Here we are on the earth. Is it possible that we, with our finite minds, can know all that there is to know about God? St. Paul himself did not pretend to know all that was to be known. He said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly. . . . Now I know in part." And if we know only in part, then there is a great deal that we do not know. For myself, I would not give anything for a religion which had no mystery in it. That is why I said on Sunday that we had only one little candle. You may say that is rather underrating it, but that is far better than overstating things. There is a beautiful expression by Browning in "The Ring and the Book." The words are supposed to be uttered by a poor girl who had been rescued by a priest in the story, and she says, "God stooping shows sufficient of His light for us in the dark to rise by, and I rise." That is exactly what I believe. We have light in the mystery, but the mystery remains.

Q. Does the Bishop believe in conditional immortality?

A. Here is a mystery which has not been revealed. You know in the New Testament a mystery means something which was once kept secret, but which has now been told us. But there are certain mysteries which have never been revealed,

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

and we have never been told what is to happen to a soul that is permanently impenitent. When I come to the question of Hell, I believe myself with the great writer Bengel that no soul can ever remain in Hell which once turns to God. But the question is, What happens to the soul that never does turn to God? We do not know. Bishop Gore, who has always been a great teacher to me, has come round, I think, in his latest book, to believe in conditional immortality, but he would be the first to say it was only a theory and that the true answer has never been revealed to us. When our Lord was asked, "Are there few that be saved?" He refused to answer, but said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." And that is exactly where we are left to-day.

Q. Does the Bishop believe that temperament is isolated from character? and in judging character should not allowances be made for temperament?

A. I have partially answered that already, and, as I said, it is the struggling with the difficult temperament which helps to make character. It is a well-known saying that a constant series of decisions makes a habit, and a series of habits makes a character.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Q. Was the raising of Lazarus a mistake on the part of our Lord in that it made religion more mysterious?

A. I believe that the raising of Lazarus was to prepare the way for the Resurrection of our Lord Himself, and I think very likely it was intended to prepare the minds of the disciples for His own Resurrection. Evidently it did not succeed, for to the very last they did not expect Him to rise again. I cannot help feeling that if the Resurrection of Christ had been an isolated fact, and not prepared for in any way, it would have been far harder to believe.

Q. What does the Bishop consider to be the modern idea of Hell?

A. I believe that Hell is a state. Some people are living in Hell here and now. That man who is living a lustful life and who cannot break away from his sin is living in Hell. If a man chose the good, he could not remain in Hell, because Hell is a state of mind. I believe it is possible for a man even after a million years to turn from a state of Hell to a state of salvation if only he desires the good. Dr. Pusey, who is one of the most strict teachers

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

on the subject of Hell, says: "No soul will ever be lost which has not had the Father throw His arms around him, and look into his face with eyes of love, and yet has deliberately rejected Him." Therefore you cannot, as it were, by accident, slip into Hell.

Q. Does the Bishop think that the problem of evil is satisfied by the doctrine of original sin?

A. Original sin only throws the difficulty farther back. As you trace back the history of the human race you find the sense of shame. You find evidences of a sense of shame even on the inscriptions of the Pharaohs in Egypt. Original sin really means that as far as you can trace the human race, you find traces of sin. But I do not consider myself that it explains the problem of evil at all. There is a very fine book by one of our great theologians, Dr. Williams, on the whole question of original sin, and it throws very great light upon the whole matter. I think we have probably misunderstood a good deal about original sin. What I understand by it is this, that there is a taint in human nature. In that sense a child is "born in sin." You do not mean by that to say it is a sinful child, but that it inherits this taint in human nature. There is a flaw in the marble.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Q. Is an "act of God" better described as an "act of Nature"? If so, is Nature responsible? and what relation has Nature to God?

A. I do hope you will remember that beautiful expression which comes from the book I recommended you to read, *The Faith that Rebels*, by Professor Cairns. He described Nature as a silken glove on the Hand of God. You cannot alter or move an iron mask, but you can work through a silken glove. The point about the silken glove is that God does respect the laws He has made. If people will persist in building their houses near a volcano, or where they know an earthquake is likely to take place, they must not blame God if misfortune befalls them. God does not interfere with the working out of His laws. If a rascal goes and puts a sleeper on the rail over which the Scotch express is to pass, God will not send an angel to pick that sleeper up, but He may direct and guide someone to that very spot, who is led to see the danger in time, and so to avert a catastrophe. If we put our hands into the fire, we know we shall be burned. What we have got to do is to learn to control the laws of nature. Miss Royden, in a very interesting book, speaks of the natives of Australia looking up and seeing an aeroplane, and that aeroplane was to them a

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

perfect miracle. But we have learned to work that miracle by obeying the laws of nature. God is not controlled by His own laws. What science calls the uniformity of nature, faith calls the fidelity of God, and if God in the person of Jesus Christ chooses to heal lepers by a word, if He chooses to walk on the water, if He chooses to feed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, He can do it because it is the almighty Hand controlling the silken glove.

Q. Is sin inherited? If so, are we responsible for our sins?

A. I do not think for a moment that we are responsible for our inherited temperament. But believing, as I do, that we have free wills, and power enough to resist, we are responsible for the sins we do commit.

Q. Is pain a necessity in the remedial process of God?

A. Pain is very much misunderstood. Pain is a danger-signal; it is like a red flag. You would not know there was anything wrong were it not for the pain that you feel, and it is also a guide to the doctor in discovering what is the matter with you. Pain is one of our greatest life-preserv-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

ers. We are saved by pain. When we have recovered from some illness, behind the door there stands unnoticed the best nurse of all, and that is pain.

Q. In what way is Spiritualism an answer to man's needs?

A. I do not believe myself that it has ever been proved that we can have direct connection with the spirits in the other world. They are very near to us, we are brought into communion with them through Christ, but if you read Sir Oliver Lodge's book about his son Raymond, you will find that there is very little in that book that is very convincing. I do not believe myself that Spiritualism helps at all. I am always sorry when I hear of people spending their time trying to get into touch with the other world. I sympathize with them deeply in their desire to meet their dear ones who have passed over, but we believe in the communion of saints. We believe that at the Holy Communion we come into touch through Christ Himself with the spirits of those who have gone before.

Q. Is Christianity banking on the future at the expense of the present, and emphasizing rewards at the expense of present suffering?

LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

A. That used to be the argument of the Socialists in Victoria Park. They used to say, "You people talk about the other world, and you do not take any trouble about this." But for the last twenty years there has been an extraordinary lessening of this particular argument, because the Church has been leading in the way of social reform. No one can deny that the Church has been in the thick of the fight for bettering the condition of the people.

Q. Can the religion of the Stoic be accepted as an answer to the way of dealing with grief?

A. One has a great respect for the Stoics. They did not believe anything about the other world. They simply set their teeth and bore up as well as they could. But we have Christian fortitude, and our road is lightened up by the hope of the other world. Therefore our Christian fortitude is a far better weapon than the old pagan Stoicism.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY¹

"I am the Way."—St. John xiv. 6.

You will understand, I am sure, that there is no pulpit in the world to me like this one at Bethnal Green. Since I was here I have preached in thousands of churches up and down the world, but the two years that I spent as Rector of the Parish Church here are written indelibly upon my memory. Very few of you here to-night will remember that time, now thirty-five years ago. When I was asked by Bishop Temple, when working at Oxford House, to undertake the work of this parish with its ten thousand people, I felt very doubtful whether I should be able to combine the two. But in those days we had five curates, ten lay

¹ Bethnal Green Parish Church.

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

workers, and ten lady workers who visited the people, knocking at every door, and inviting personally almost every man and woman to church. I always picture on a Sunday evening this church packed to overflowing, with not a single place vacant, even in the gallery, and the thought of those thrilling mission services which we used to have night after night has warmed my soul ever since. I honour these splendid men here who are to-day toiling on year after year, but some day I want to see these galleries crammed as they were in the old days, and to feel that old-time enthusiasm which existed then. It could be done again, if only there was an adequate staff to cope with the work, and if only men and women would respond adequately to God's demands.

The question we are discussing in our Mission in East London is this: Why am I a Christian? I wonder what answer you would give if that question were asked you. I asked an educated girl the other day why she was a Christian, and she said, "Well, Bishop, I do not really know. I

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

suppose it was because my parents took me to church." And perhaps one of you might say, "Oh, a friend asked me to come to the service, and that is why I am a Christian." Or another might say, "My father and mother went to church, and I went with them." Still another might say, "I saw funerals as they passed down the street, and I wondered whether there was another world or not, and I could not find any explanation except that there must be a Beyond, and so I am a Christian because Christianity teaches me that there is a life hereafter." Those answers may be quite good in themselves, but I want you to be able to give a much clearer answer than that as to why you are a Christian. I am perfectly certain that we should be much stronger in the faith if we really understood more clearly what it is to be a Christian. We believe that there are reasons that can satisfy the mind as well as the heart, and therefore I am going to endeavour to give you to-night one clear answer to that question, and I want you to ask yourselves, "Do I follow the

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

Bishop? Can I give the same reason that he can give?"

Why am I a Christian? I am a Christian, first and foremost, because I believe that Jesus Christ is the Way. Jesus Himself said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." His disciples when He was here upon earth asked just the same sort of questions as are asked by boys at the public schools or by working men in the parks. They say, like St. Thomas, "We know not whither Thou goest, how can we know the way?" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," said Christ. And you remember the plea of one of the disciples, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." And He replied in words that are to my mind the most precious words in the New Testament, "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*" Therefore one reason that I am a Christian is (1) because Jesus Christ declared that He was the Way, and (2) because He has proved Himself to be the Way.

(1) First of all, He said, "*I am the Way,*" and that is what I have got to prove to you to-night,

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

and it is very much more important than appears at first sight. Why do I say that it is of vital importance that Jesus Christ said of Himself that He was the Way? In my young days I had my doubts, as I daresay some of you young men and women have your doubts, when you wake up from a child's faith, and ask yourselves, "Why do I believe this? Why do I believe that? Why do I believe these things that have been taught me by my parents and teachers?" I passed through a very long and painful time of doubt when I was a young man, and the book that helped me most was a book which I still believe to be one of the greatest books ever written, and that is Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, and that book put this very clear question to me as a thinking young man, Did Jesus Christ speak the truth, or not? What did He say about Himself? I studied the New Testament to see what He said about Himself, and I found that He declared, "I am the Light of the world"; "I am the Bread of Life"; "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

and I will give you rest"; "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." And I said to myself, "I have got to choose; either the One Who made those solemn declarations is a deceiver, or He is the eternal Son of God, He is the Word of God, He is the revelation of the Father. He is the One prepared from the foundation of the world to come down to us," and that is what St. John said. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Sometimes when I am asked by the editor of one of the daily papers to write a little sermon, I generally endeavour to find time to write it, because I realize that it will be read by millions of people instead of simply being heard by perhaps a few hundred. I wrote an article the other day, in response to the request of the editor of a well-known paper, on the two religions, on the one religion that was popular to-day which looked upon Jesus Christ merely as a good man, who came here and preached many wonderful sermons, and then

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

went away again; that was a religion that did not worry about sin and its atonement. And then I dealt with the other religion, one which I have preached before many thousands of students at many Universities, namely, that from all eternity God was preparing a great revelation of Himself, that He prepared the Jews through the prophets, and that He had prophets even among the Gentiles, like Plato, who said that "If *the* good man should come to the earth he would surely be put to death." The wise men looking for the star that was to herald His birth knew that there was a great One coming. Two thousand years ago He did come, He Whose coming had been thus prepared for millions of years. You would expect such a One to have power over sickness and disease; you would not expect death to hold Him.

When therefore Jesus Christ, the truthful, the sincere, the humble, the good, the pure, looked into my face, and said, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" I thank God that I was able to answer with my reason as well as with my heart,

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

“Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.” This is the most wonderful thing in the world, and a precious truth to proclaim. If we see God in Christ, it is the greatest revelation ever made to mankind. I say then that I am a Christian because, first of all, I believe Jesus Christ when He says, “I am the Way.”

(2) But, in the second place, *He proved Himself to be the Way* to the knowledge of God, the Way of approach to God Himself, the Way to happiness, the Way to holiness, and the Way to prayer.

(a) First, He showed Himself to be *the Way to the knowledge of God*. I do not think we realize how little we should have known about God if it had not been for Jesus Christ. We should not have known what God was like. In China they are living in constant dread of evil spirits; millions of them think they are being pursued by the devil. We get the same thought brought out in Browning's “Caliban upon Setebos.” Caliban was a savage, and Setebos was his god, and he believed

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that his god liked to do the same spiteful things he did himself. As you travel about the world you find the vaguest ideas about God.

But how different is your idea of God when you see Him revealed in Jesus Christ! The men in Victoria Park used very often to pose me with questions. I used to write the answers in the Oxford House magazine, and I believe you can still buy at the S.P.C.K. *Old Testament and New Testament Difficulties*. I used to say to them, "Why do you think that God could not do a thing that is unjust?" The answer is because we have been taught to believe that He is like Jesus Christ. That does not mean that He is just a good-natured God Who looks lightly upon sin, and will forgive everybody, whether they are repentant or not. Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh was full of moral indignation against hypocrisy and against cruelty to children. The wrath of the Lamb is a terrible thing, but when you see His kindness to the sick, His love for the children, when you see how anxious He was to seek and to save that which

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

was lost, you seem to get a real picture of God Himself, of Someone to Whom we can pray, of Someone we can love.

(b) Secondly, Jesus Christ is *the Way of approach to God*. Now, this may seem much more difficult to believe. But we find in the New Testament that there was a barrier between men and God. I read recently a very excellent article in the *Church Times* by Dr. Sparrow Simpson on "Reconciliation," and he is quite right in saying that the teaching of St. Paul certainly was that God had to be reconciled to man, as well as man reconciled to God, because there was an obstacle that had to be removed. I can imagine a mother really always loving her girl, but if that girl is rebellious and selfish, that creates an obstacle, and the girl must be reconciled to the mother, as well as the mother reconciled to the girl. The point is that Jesus Christ came, and to use the forcible language of Holy Scripture, He broke down the middle wall of partition. Whatever the barrier was, He struck it down. "Be ye reconciled to God." We are

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

told that we priests have the ministry of reconciliation. We do not want to argue about subtle points; the fact is that Jesus Christ came and broke down the barrier that separated us from God, and now in Him we all have access, by one Spirit unto the Father. There is not one soul here who has not free access to God through Jesus Christ. That is a wonderful thing. Jesus Christ is the Way to God Himself. Every child in Bethnal Green can kneel down and find free access to the eternal heart of God Himself.

(c) Then He has proved Himself to be *the Way to happiness*. I remember being at the bedside of Father Wilson, of St. Augustine's, Stepney, before he died, and he said to me, "Bishop, I suppose I am the happiest man that ever lived." The world would never be able to understand that. I remember, too, a good-natured Major visiting me when I was here at Bethnal Green, and when I started off on my visiting, he said, "I cannot think how you fellows can do that day after day. It doesn't do any good, surely?" That was his idea. The

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

world will never be able to understand how a man like Father Wilson could live for thirty-three years in a poor little street in Stepney, and yet be the happiest man that ever lived. I visited Father Wainwright just before he died. He was too ill to say anything, but there was that same bright happy look on his face. That proves to my mind that Jesus Christ has shown Himself to be the Way to perfect happiness.

But that happiness is to be found not only in the lives of faithful priests, for there are some of you here who could say the same thing. Perhaps ten years ago you never said a prayer, you never went to church, you had not been confirmed, you were not a communicant. Were you as happy then as you are now? Of course you were not. You know perfectly well that since you have enjoyed the ministrations of the Church, since you have tried to live the Christian life, you have been ten times as happy as you ever were before. I should like to feel that every one of you here had found the way to happiness. Of course there must, first

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

of all, be confession. You must confess whatever is wrong in your life. There must be a frank facing of the past. But it is extraordinary what peace it brings when you make a clean breast of everything, peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(d) But Jesus Christ has proved Himself to be the Way to happiness because He has proved Himself to be the *Way to holiness*. Now, do not make any mistake about holiness. There are those who think that in order to be holy you have to be very melancholy, and to go about with a long face, and to be rather unnatural, in fact rather a prig, and that an ordinary person cannot be holy. Well, as a matter of fact, the holiest people I have ever known have been the most natural, and the most human, and the merriest. We all know from literature that St. Francis of Assisi was one of the merriest men that ever lived. I remember Bishop King, one of the holiest men I ever knew, and he was just like a boy. He used to stay with me at London House, and I used to take him to the House of Lords to vote during the debates on the

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

Education Bill. He was full of laughter and fun right up to the time of his death. The holiest people are like that. And therefore do not, for a single moment, mix up holiness of life with something which is distasteful and unattractive. Remember the prophecy, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

In other words, it is not a particularly easy road to tread, but it is an easy road to *find*. The wayfaring men, working men and working women, they can find the way. You may know of someone who is living a saintly life, and if you were to ask the secret of the holiness of that man or woman, the answer would be, "Because he follows Jesus Christ every day." Now if that is so, then Jesus Christ is the Way to holiness. There was a book written years ago by an American writer named Sheldon. The book was entitled, *What Would Jesus do?* I think the reason why that book had

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

such a tremendous circulation was because it answered that question which is so often being asked. If Jesus Christ had to go to the City every morning as I do, what would He do? What would Jesus do in this great crisis in my life? What would Jesus do in the case of the mother who has to find bread for the children when their father is out of work? Let us ask that same question every day of our lives, What would Jesus do?

(e) Lastly, Jesus Christ is *the Way to prayer*. Jesus Christ prayed all the time. He prayed as He breathed. He looks up again and again and speaks to His Father in Heaven, and at the end of His life He says: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." There is no real reason why we busy people should not pray all the time. We do not need to get on our knees every time, we do not need always to come into church to pray, though that is a good thing to do; but if we have got the right spirit, if we really believe, as Jesus Himself did, that God is looking after us, and that He is close to us all the time, then we shall have

JESUS CHRIST THE WAY

the secret of true prayer. By a movement of the mind you can commend yourself and your work to God. It is the atmosphere of prayer which surrounds your life that brings down the power of God. Have you taken Jesus Christ as the Way? I promise you that if you take Him as the Way you will find rest unto your souls.

CHAPTER V

THE WAY TO PRAY¹

LAST Sunday I spoke of Jesus Christ as the Way to the knowledge of God, and I showed that we should know very little about God apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ. As He Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." I spoke also of Christ as the Way of access to God. He broke down, as St. Paul says, the middle wall of partition between God and man. In other words, He made an *at-one-ment*, for that is really what Atonement means. We have access by one Spirit unto the Father. I also proved that Christ was the Way to happiness, and the Way to holiness.

Christ also showed us the Way to true prayer. It was as His disciples watched Him praying that they said, "Teach us to pray." Evidently there was something about the way He prayed, some-

¹ Bethnal Green Parish Church, Wednesday evening.

THE WAY TO PRAY

thing which overawed and attracted them, so that they wanted Him to teach them how to approach God. Praying is like breathing; and I want to enlarge on that thought to-night. When we inhale we breathe in the good air, and when we exhale we breathe out the bad air. That is what we hope our king has been doing, breathing out the poison which nearly took away his life, and breathing in the ozone which is so life-giving. Praying is like breathing. To pray without ceasing is not a thing which is unnatural and impossible. It is what we have all got to do. Some of you may think that it is quite out of the question. You say, "I have to be about my work in the City. I have to rush off in the morning to catch my train or bus. How can I pray without ceasing?" The whole point is that in addition to putting aside a little time in the morning for communion with God, you should dedicate the whole of your work to Him. To pray is to work; to work is to pray. Therefore you need not feel at all cut off from God even when you are very busy in the midst of your duties. You may

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

do your work in the spirit of prayer; and if you work in that spirit, then you will be always ready when the temptations of life come, and you can lift up your heart in prayer to God for His strength to overcome. Our Lord was always speaking to His Father, and we have in the New Testament a record of many of the prayers that He offered. If we lived in a constant attitude of prayer, it is wonderful how serene our lives would be, and how calm and how strong we should be in the hour of temptation. I expect you have often heard those beautiful lines of Archbishop Trench:

“Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or thoughtless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?”

THE WAY TO PRAY

Let us realize that we have the undivided attention of One Who is infinite and Who can give Himself wholly to each. Let us realize that we have all the resources of God at our disposal, and it will change the whole of life for us. I want you in this Mission to get back to the thought that you are of infinite value to God. God gives us His whole attention when we cry unto Him in prayer.

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT PRAYER

Let us go on to consider what are called difficulties in prayer.

(1) One of the principal difficulties that people have in regard to prayer is that they do not seem to get answers to their prayers. How many people have come to me, and have said, "I have given up praying because I do not receive any answers to my prayers." Remember this, that it is not for you or me to dictate to God as to what the answer to our prayers should be. God is absolute Wisdom, and He knows far better what is good for us than we can possibly know ourselves. We have no

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

right to say that our prayers are not answered because they do not seem to be answered in just the way we expected. Think what a fine Christian man St. Paul was, and he prayed that his thorn in the flesh might be taken from him. It was not removed, but yet his prayer was answered, for Christ said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." I know of two people who are lying on beds of sickness and pain, and they are both praying for deliverance. That may not be God's will for them, but, nevertheless, their prayers are being answered, for I can see each time that I visit them that wonderful supernatural grace is being given to them to bear the pain and the suffering. I do not know what you are praying for, but I am perfectly certain that, whatever it is, your prayer is being answered. I cannot say what the answer will be, but I do know this, that no genuine prayer offered in the Name of the Lord Jesus is ever unanswered. Do not imagine for a moment that your prayers are unanswered.

THE WAY TO PRAY

(2) Another difficulty often raised with regard to prayer is this: Why should I pray at all, if, as you say, God loves me, and wants to give me what is best? In answer to that I would remind you that we are the children of God. You fathers and mothers, suppose your children never spoke to you except to ask you for something. You know that it is the expression of their love that you seek for in them. You like them to confide in you, and to tell you about everything. Suppose that there is a boy I am interested in, and I send him down to a friend of mine in the City, and I ask him to help the boy to make good. Well, if that boy does not co-operate with my friend, if he does not take any trouble himself, it will be impossible for my friend to help him to get on. Our Lord when He was here upon earth could not do any mighty works in a certain place which He visited because of the unbelief of those around Him, although He was Himself full of power. So God asks us to co-operate with Him by our humble prayer.

(3) Still another difficulty is this. Says some-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

one: My heart is so cold, I get no sense of happiness when I pray. I am sure that what Father Vernon said in a recent sermon must have brought comfort to many of those who listened to him. He said that although he celebrated every day at the altar, he never remembered having experienced half of an hour of sensible joy. There you have the testimony of a man who is exercising a wonderful influence. He lives by faith, and not by feeling. I do believe that there are times when we experience thrills of spiritual joy. We come to the Holy Communion one morning and we have a deep sense of peace and happiness. But if you do not always experience this ecstasy, do not be troubled. Remember that—

“When the tired waves vainly breaking
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creeks and inlets breaking
Comes silent flooding of the main.”

If you watch the tide, nothing seems to happen on the beach; there is the tide flooding round the coast, but there seems at any particular place to

THE WAY TO PRAY

be little progress made. Let us believe that God's Spirit is sweeping round the world, and in time we shall see the result of His working.

(4) Then comes the fourth difficulty, We have no place where we can pray. I have often told my young people in West London that they ought to thank God that they have at least one room which they can call their own. I know that many of you here in Bethnal Green have to share the home with the rest of the family, and it is difficult for you to get any real privacy. But the church is always open, where you can meet with God. But even when you can find no place in which to pray, remember you can always shut the door of your heart and be alone with God. "Be still, and know that I am God." "Where there's a will there's a way," and anyone who really wants to pray can always find the time and place.

SECRETS OF PRAYER

Now I pass on to what our Lord has shown to be the secrets of successful prayer, and I want to give you these secrets under four headings.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

(1) *Put first things first.* When our Lord taught His people to pray He did not give them a number of instructions, but He gave them the Lord's Prayer as the model of all prayers. If you study the Lord's Prayer you will see that all the important things are put first. "Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." All those petitions come before the prayer for our daily bread. That may seem to be a hard lesson for some, because I know what a terrible struggle goes on constantly down here for daily bread. I do sympathize with you, but still we have got to put first things first, and the spread of the Kingdom comes even before our daily bread.

Let me tell you a story. When I was living here in Bethnal Green I knew a man who was earning what in those days seemed to be the wonderful wage of four pounds a week, but he was earning it in a way that offended his conscience. He was making designs for public-houses, and he was himself a very strong Temperance man. I was very

THE WAY TO PRAY

anxious that he should not act unwisely in any way, and so I consulted Bishop Temple, who was then Bishop of London, and his advice was that the man should follow the dictates of his own conscience. Well, this man eventually gave up his job, and he very soon got another. That man quite deliberately put first things first. He put the Kingdom of God and his conscience before material things. In putting first things first it does not mean that you are to be careless about earning your daily bread. I know we are told to take no thought for to-morrow; that means we are not to worry about the future. We must take thought in providing for our physical needs, when it comes to the point, we must put God and His Kingdom and His righteousness even before the earning of our daily bread.

(2) The second secret of success in prayer is that we must pray *in the Name of the Lord Jesus*. That does not merely mean just simply saying "For Jesus Christ's sake" at the end of our prayers. It means a great deal more than that. You

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

women who are married use your husband's name. He trusts you with his name because he regards his honour as safe in your hands. His interests are your interests, and you use his name because you are united in him. He and you together form one. It is in that same sense that we use the Name of Christ. It is on the understanding that His interests are our interests, that His honour is our honour. When we use His Name we are pleading the one Sacrifice for sin. We have power in prayer in exact proportion as we are identified with Jesus Christ in thought and will and look at things from His point of view.

(3) Thirdly, we have got to pray *according to the will of God*. That does not limit the scope of our prayer. If we really believe in a loving God and in His will for us, then we know that He knows what is best for us. Therefore if we pray according to the will of God, we are not limiting our prayer at all. Our Lord did this very same thing in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed and said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass

THE WAY TO PRAY

from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Christ only asks us to obey the law which He obeyed.

(4) The fourth secret of successful prayer is that we should *pray in the Spirit*. We do not realize the wonderful action of the Holy Spirit in prayer. The Holy Spirit prays in us with "groanings which cannot be uttered," which means in other words yearnings too deep for human language. "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire" that should be our prayer constantly before we approach God, that the Holy Spirit may pray *in* us, and may stir us up to pray for the right things and in the right way, that we may be borne up by the Holy Spirit in a tide of prayer. There was a most helpful book that I used to read when I was a boy, called *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. It was by Andrew Murray, but I fear it may be out of print. It brought home all the things that were said about prayer in the Bible.

If we only face those four difficulties about prayer, and if we take those four secrets of success-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

ful prayer, and if we pray for the Holy Spirit to teach us how to pray, not only for ourselves but for one another, and, above all, if we attend regularly at the Holy Communion, we shall learn to know what true prayer is, and we shall possess a calmness and a serenity and a power which we have never possessed before, and our whole life will be bound as with golden chains, about the feet of God.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Why does the Church, teaching that Heaven is a place better than "this vain world of sin," pray for the recovery of the sick? Would it not be more consistent to pray that the sick should die and go straight to Heaven?

A. We may sometimes be a little inconsistent. We do profess to believe in a glorious world beyond the grave, and yet we cling to life even when it is full of misery and difficulties, and we do not really seem to live up to our faith. Yet, it is quite natural to pray that if it is God's will we might remain on this earth. Life is very sweet. And naturally also we want our dear ones to remain with us as long as possible. I do not think it is

THE WAY TO PRAY

inconsistent to pray for the recovery of the sick. We sometimes do help in the recovery of the sick by our prayers, for to give hope and courage to a sick person goes a long way to bringing about renewed health and strength.

Q. What is the correct thing to do if you are trying to lead a Christian life, and your fellow-workers do not care about it? Should one be silent or not when they are inclined to jeer at anyone for being a Churchman?

A. That, I think, must depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called "the Finger of God," and in the finger there is the sense of touch, or tact. When we talk about tact we mean by it a delicate sense of touch. There are times when we should speak, and times when we should not speak. There are times when we ought to bear our witness, and be brave enough to say, "I go to church," and so to stand up for our principles. But sometimes it is better to be silent. If you are praying without ceasing, you will be guided by the Holy Spirit as to what you should do.

Q. Why does the Church expect us to accept the old form of religion taught in mediæval days,

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

when obviously the teaching which satisfied the needs of that day is inadequate to meet the needs of to-day? Should not religious teaching be brought more up-to-date to suit these more scientific times?

A. The new Commentary which has recently been issued does bring the teaching of the Bible more up-to-date, and there are also many other books which are doing the same thing. But if you mean, by bringing the teaching up-to-date, that if you follow science, you must throw over the miracles, that cannot be right, for the miracles are an integral part of the Gospel.

Q. Why was it essential that Christ's body should rise again? Is it necessary to believe in a bodily resurrection? Is it not sufficient that the spirit should survive after death?

A. I am afraid I do not agree with the questioner here. I think myself that the empty tomb is an integral part of the Resurrection, because what we want is not just to believe that Christ appeared as a spirit, but we want to believe that in His actual Person He conquered death. You find that is insisted upon all through the New

THE WAY TO PRAY

Testament. The appearance of the clothes in the tomb after the Resurrection seemed to show that the Body had risen through the clothes. The Special Preface on Easter Day says, "Who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life." That is the note of victory we get on Easter Day.

Q. Did God create everything in the world? It is difficult to believe that wicked and malicious people are not a creation of the devil.

A. Certainly God did not create the bad things in wicked people. God created everything that was good. Every created spirit had a capacity of living with God, but free will was misused and this resulted in the coming of evil into the world. It was always brought up against us during the War, that God was responsible for that great upheaval. God hates war, but having given men a free will, and man's free will having been perverted enough to bring about that terrible struggle, unless God was to crush man's free will He had to allow it to go on. We used to discuss in our meetings in Oxford Hall as to whether it was better to be like clocks that were bound to go, or like marionettes which were pulled by a string, or like men with a capacity for doing right or wrong, and the men

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

generally ended up by wanting to be men. It is quite wrong to suppose that God created men bad. He created them with a capacity for doing good; it is the devil who causes them to do wrong.

Q. Is it right to pray for material things? What did Christ mean when He told us that whatever we ask the Father in His name He would give us?

A. Yes, certainly we may pray for material things, providing that we follow the conditions which I have laid down. I have already pointed out that Nature is like a silken glove upon an Almighty Hand, and not an iron mask. That means that God controls the laws of Nature, but He is not bound by them. We may pray for material things so long as we pray in the spirit of God. And if we put first things first, if we pray in Christ's Name, if we pray according to the will of God, and if we pray in the Spirit, there is nothing that God will not do, although the answer to our prayer may be totally different from what we expect.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH¹

"I am the Truth."—St. John xiv. 6.

IN this East London Mission we are trying to answer the question, "Why am I a Christian?" And I should like you to ask yourselves that question before we go any further, because I feel quite certain that the Church would be very much stronger in its witness to-day if only those who did attend church regularly were able to give a reason for the faith which is in them. I want to bring to you to-night another answer to that question, as to why I am a Christian.

It is because not only that Jesus Christ said He was the Way, but also because He said He was

¹ St. John's Church, Hackney.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

the Truth. Think what a tremendous claim that is. When you remember all the philosophers of the past who have sought for the truth—Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, and the rest—when you think of the astronomers who have studied the stars in the heavens, and then listen to One Who stood forth and said, “I am the Truth”; not, “I *tell* the Truth,” or “I *bear witness* to the Truth,” but “I AM THE TRUTH,” I can only say that it is a most tremendous claim to make. Either such a statement is the greatest revelation ever made in the world, or it is the most daring blasphemy ever uttered. Think also of His other declarations —“Before Abraham was, I AM”; “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”; “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” No one who was not divine could make such stupendous claims. I believe now with all my heart—though it took me a long time as a young man to believe it—that He is verily the Truth. When He looks at us and says, “What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?” we may make answer with our reason as well as

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

with our hearts, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

I. But now let us examine this great statement in detail.

(1) First of all, *is there such a thing as absolute truth?* You remember that Pilate asked, "What is truth?" As Bacon in his famous essay on "Truth" says, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and waited not for an answer." With all due respect to Bacon, I doubt whether poor Pilate was jesting; I think it was a cry almost of despair. You ask your sceptical friend who never goes inside a church what sort of a hope he has got, and he will very likely ask if there is such a thing as truth. I cannot tell you how happy you people ought to be, for I am taking it for granted that you would not be here if you had not made some sort of answer to this question, and had not been taught to believe that Jesus Christ is the Truth. Now, if He is the Truth, then what does it mean? It means that He has revealed to us three of the

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

mightiest secrets in the world which no one knew before.

(a) In the first place, *we are told what is behind this puzzling world in which we live*. When I was going round the Grand Fleet during the War, I took as an illustration at the nine-o'clock service—and thank God they have prayers at nine o'clock in every ship in the Royal Navy—that if I threw up a box of letters into the air, it would not fall down again into a play of Shakespeare, even if I repeated the process a million times. Why? Because behind the plays of Shakespeare there was a master mind. Is there not the mark of a great Mind in the world to-day? Does the sun rise every morning, and does it sink down again to rest at the close of the day, by accident. Is there no meaning in the ordering of the stars and the heavenly bodies? Why do not these great stars collide? Because there is a Mind at work. Our atheist friends maintain that the atoms of the world have thrown themselves into the universe.

Again, when you come to study mankind, you

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

find the same great Mind at work. Is there not the voice of conscience in the breast of every man? We all know the difference between right and wrong, and though we have to educate the conscience, the conscience is there. Children know the difference between right and wrong. But how did the conscience get there? If I were to ask a number of people who said they did not believe in God, or in prayer, to account for the presence of the voice of conscience within their hearts revealing to them the thing that is right and the thing that is wrong, they would find it difficult to give me an answer. The only answer is that God made us, and that God Who is a righteous God has put a "reclaiming witness against Himself," as Dr. Chalmers said, in the breast of every man. But unless Jesus Christ has come to reveal God to us, I could not have proved to you that there was a living, loving God behind the world. *Now* I understand something of the meaning of creation. You remember Browning's beautiful lines:

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

“O Saul, it shall be a face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever! A Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stands!”

It is like awaking from a nightmare to believe that here at the centre of the universe is a living, loving God, and that there is a silken glove on that Almighty Hand, and not an iron mask. “The Lord sitteth above the water-floods and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.” Why, it makes all the difference to us, in this little short span of seventy years or more during which we sojourn in this world, to know that we are in the hands of a merciful Creator. When people try to puzzle you about miracles, you ask them to explain the wireless. We have the wireless to-day because there has been discovered the working of a law of which we knew nothing twenty years ago. And so with the miracles. They are worked by a higher law than we know now. The Almighty Hand which uses Nature as a silken glove is not “cabin’d,

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

cribb'd, or confin'd" by His own creation. Christ brought in that higher law when He fed the five thousand, and raised the dead, and rose Himself from the dead on the Resurrection morning. And therefore the first secret that has been revealed to us is that there is a living, loving Person behind creation.

(b) But the second secret is an even more beautiful one. I have yet to find any love that does not imply the possibility of suffering, and what we see on Passion Sunday is *a revelation of the heart of God*. As Browning so aptly puts it:

"The very God! think Abib: dost thou think?
So the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder, comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of Mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me Who have died for thee!' "

We live in the midst of suffering. Constantly a telephone message brings me the news of the death or illness of someone. When I used to visit the

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

poor people in East London, that was the one thing that used to comfort them, the thought that God suffered with them.

“Oh, let him, whose sorrow
No relief can find,
Trust in God, and borrow
Ease for heart and mind.

“Where the mourner weeping
Sheds the secret tear,
God His watch is keeping,
Though none else be near.”

After a long ministry, I would not part for anything, with the truth that Christ has revealed to us the heart of God.

(c) Then the third thing we have had revealed to us is that the Cross is not only an eternal thing, that Christ was “crucified before the foundation of the world,” but that the *Cross is set up in our midst to-day in Hackney*. Forty years ago I preached some very simple sermons called *The Men who Crucify Christ*, and *Friends of the*

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

*Master.*¹ The little books which contain those sermons are still being bought to-day, and I believe the reason is because they deal with an eternal truth.

I read this Lent a very ingenious and clever book by Prebendary Mackay on *The Minor Agents in the Passion*. If you are to keep your Holy Week properly, you must remember that in a very real sense Jesus Christ is crucified in your midst to-day. It is an eternal fact going on. When you see Him you will see the marks of the nails in His hands and feet and the mark of the spear in His side, and therefore we are bound to ask ourselves, What is our attitude towards the Cross? God help us if we are, like Judas, betraying Christ. God help us if we are, like Herod, sneering and ridiculing. God help us if we are, like Pilate, washing our hands before the multitude. God help us if we do nothing more than those professional philanthropists who were paid by the Guild of Women of Jerusalem to offer the soothing opiate to the sufferers on the

¹ Both published by Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 3 Paternoster Buildings, E.C.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Cross, or even than the good-natured man who put the vinegar to the Saviour's lips. I do pray that Holy Week may be a revelation to some of you dear people, so that you may realize that you will have to give an account of your attitude towards those wounds in the feet and hands of Christ, for the Crucifixion is an eternal fact, and it was Christ Himself Who said, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."

II. Then may I show what a bearing this has upon many things which puzzle us to-day?

(I) If Jesus Christ is the truth, it relieves our minds of certain things which used to be a great puzzle to us in the East End. We used to hear a great deal in Victoria Park about the opposition that existed between science and religion, and you hear about it to-day. It was the same thing in America. After one of my lectures at the University of Michigan, one of the young men came to me and said, "It is no use pretending that you can reconcile Science and Religion, because you

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

cannot." But if Jesus Christ was the Truth, there is no contradiction whatever between Science and Religion, because *Truth cannot contradict itself*. The Bible was never meant to teach us Science, or Astronomy, or History; it was meant to teach us Goodness. I hope you are not still puzzled by those old difficulties. I know many young people are puzzled by what they hear said at the street corners. But we have found to-day the truth about the Bible. The Bible has made no mistakes; it is we who have made mistakes about the Bible. If only we faced these things we should see that there is no contradiction between science and religion, because Truth cannot contradict itself.

(2) Then, again, *we need not be nervous concerning the Faith*. A story is told of a man who went into one of the famous picture-galleries of Florence, and he looked round very casually at the great masterpieces, and he said, "I do not think much of them." The custodian who overheard the remark, said, "It is not the pictures, sir, which are on their trial, but it is the spectators who are on

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

their trial here.” People oppose the Truth and criticize the Truth, but it never stood firmer than it does to-day. It was once thought that the Acts of the Apostles was a second-century document, but Professor Ramsay, the archæologist, who went to Asia Minor, came back and told the world that the Acts of the Apostles was the best authority on the history of the Roman Empire in the first century ever written. Therefore, do not be dismayed when people declare that the Christian religion is coming to an end. The Truth can take care of itself.

(3) The next thing I want to say is that *if we believe in the Truth we are free*. We are free from many foolish superstitions; and we are also freed from the burden of unrepented sin. Numbers of men and women are carrying about with them a sad heart because they have never faced their past at all. If only they went straight to their priest and then confessed¹ their sin to God, and received

¹ As directed in the Prayer Book; see the Rubric in the Communion Service.

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

from their priest the benefit of absolution, their consciences would be put at ease, and they would begin to live new lives. Our Mother Church leaves the question of confession in the presence of a priest entirely to your own conscience, but often it is a great help when you are troubled and perplexed about some besetting sin to be able to go to someone who can help and advise. So again the Truth frees you from a bad habit. Down in the Midlands we have a home for those who have suffered from the curse of drink. If only you could see the difference in those people when they come out after three months' treatment there, you would realize what Christ can do. If you accept the Truth, the Truth will set you free. If you have some besetting sin, you can conquer it by the power of Christ within.

The Truth also sets us free from the fear of public opinion. There are those who live all their lives in the fear of what others will say or think of them. Whereas if you are always living in the presence of the Truth, and in the company of

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Jesus Christ Himself, you do not worry about what people say.

And, lastly, you are free from the fear of death. There are thousands who all their lifetime are subject to bondage through the fear of death. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Truth, you will believe what He says, and you remember His own words, "He that believeth in Me shall never die."

I would ask you, then, one by one this solemn question, Have you accepted Jesus Christ as the Truth? He has shown us that He is the centre of the universe. He has unveiled to us the secret of creation. He has unveiled the heart of God. He has brought home to us that the Cross is a vivid reality to-day, and He has pointed the way to a life of liberty. Will you not make this answer to Him to-night as the disciples did of old, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH¹

TO-NIGHT we carry on the thoughts that occupied our attention last Sunday. We saw then that there was a living, loving God Who was at the centre of everything; we saw also that we were living our lives here and now in the presence of the Cross; we saw that the Truth of God, as revealed to us in Christ, could not contradict itself; we saw that the Truth sets us free from foolish superstitions, from the burden of unconfessed sin, from the dread of public opinion, and from the fear of death. If all that is true, then to know the Truth, to grasp the Truth, and to love the Truth is the greatest thing in the world. It should be the main aim of our lives. And what I want to try to explain to you to-night is *how we are to know the Truth*.

¹ St. John's Church, Hackney, Wednesday evening.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

(1) Well, first of all, we ought *to be taught the Truth from our earliest years*. When I was going through the Universities in America I found numbers of young men and women who had been told by their parents to wait until they were nineteen years of age, and then to choose their own religion. What was the result? They lost nineteen of the best years of their life. Can you imagine any advice more foolish? We are told that Christ grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man. It is said of Timothy "that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." And therefore we must see to it that our young people are taught to believe in God from their earliest years. You fathers and mothers here to-night, teach your boys and girls the Christian faith while they are young. That is the very best thing you can do for them. We should cherish our splendid Church schools, and for those who cannot attend the Church day schools, there are the Sunday schools. And may God bless you Sunday-school

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

teachers in your work for Him! The training of the young is almost more important than any other work in the diocese. We ought to begin to learn the Truth while we are young.

(2) Then there comes what I feel to be a very critical period when the child's faith has to be merged into a man's faith, and when you are forced to ask yourself, "Why do I believe this faith that I have been brought up to believe?" Often that time is a very painful time of questioning and doubt. I can remember, when I was myself passing through just such a critical time in my spiritual life, a wise old brother of mine writing to me when I had confided to him my difficulties, and he said, "Do not forget that he *who wills to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*" If any of you are experiencing those same difficulties, do not be discouraged. Youth is a natural time for questioning, and later on you will be able to give an account of the hope that is in you.

Moreover, be very tender to those who are going

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

through these times of difficulty and doubt. Bradlaugh, in his early years, when he went to his clergyman with doubts concerning the Old Testament, was told that he was very wicked, and that he should have no doubts at all, and that experience of his had a great deal to do with his loss of faith. You must be very tender towards those young men and women who have honest doubt. St. Thomas was an honest doubter, but he remained with the Church, and he looked for light, and therefore he had the truth revealed to him. When those doubts assail you, stick to the Church, do not give up your Communions. Make use of the light you possess, pray for guidance, get the advice of older friends, and I feel perfectly certain that you will emerge from that period of doubt with a stronger faith than you ever had before. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

(3) Then there comes the stage of *studying the Truth*. You will realize that you know very little of what the Truth really contains. Yet our per-

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

ception of the Truth is far greater than it was forty years ago, and every day adds to our perception of the Truth. More light is constantly breaking forth. As time goes on you find that you do not possess the Truth, but that the Truth possesses you; Truth becomes to you such a big thing, unfathomable, full of comfort, and full of wisdom. So do not be content with believing in a half-hearted way, but study the Truth by reading all the books you can about the Bible. Bishop Gore's *Jesus of Nazareth* and Paterson Smyth's *Life of Christ*, these are books that will help you to understand the Bible.

And then, pray over the Bible. People are so afraid of the word "meditation." Meditation is just praying over this parable, or that miracle, until the Spirit of God brings it home to your heart, and the Truth sinks into your soul. And you should read not only books about the Bible, but any books that will help your faith. It really is so foolish to take so much trouble about things in the world, and to take so little trouble about the essential things. There are people who read

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

a number of sceptical books, and they think that by listening to the lessons read in church they will be prepared to answer all the arguments that are there put forth. You must read all you can, so that you may be able to give a reason for the faith that is in you.

(4) The next stage is *seeing the Gospel in action*. I have seen the Gospel working in poor districts, and I have seen how it can transform the lives of men and women. On Sunday I visited the Church Army, and there I found nearly a hundred undergraduates, and they testified to the fact that they had no idea of the power of the Gospel until they saw it in action, and saw how it could change and uplift the lives of men and women. And they believed in it still more when they saw what it could do. When on my tour round the world I realized that the Gospel was the only thing that could do any good. I found happy Chinese Christians, with all their superstitions gone. I saw how the Gospel had changed the condition of the lepers in Japan. They were not always changed in body,

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

but always changed in spirit in a beautiful Christian leper home there. I realized that the licensed immorality in Japan could only be cured by the Gospel, and that the infant mortality (sixty-five out of every hundred children die in Tokio under a year old) can only be done away with by the power of Christ. I saw in Mohammedan lands how the women are still held in chains, and I realized what the Christian Gospel had done for women. It is indeed literally true that there is no other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

(5) Then you come to the fifth stage, which is *spreading the Truth*. I was very much touched when in Tokio I was met by a nice English girl who came to shake hands with me. She had been called to spread the Truth, and she had left her home and people, and she had gone out to Japan under the S.P.G., while her friend, the Bishop of Kensington's daughter, had gone out to Johannesburg. There is not the slightest doubt that in doing something for the Good Shepherd you gain

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

a new sense of the Good Shepherd's power and protection. If you feel lukewarm about your religion, do some work for Christ that costs you something, and you will find Him far more real. If you are seeking to spread the Truth, you will love the Truth far more, and as you go on you will find yourself possessed by the Truth.

All this leads me to ask a few home questions. Are we seeking the Truth with a view to finding it? Someone once asked me in Victoria Park, "What is better than seeking the Truth?" I replied, "Finding it." There are people who say they are honest seekers after God, but they do not always seek with the idea of finding, and finding the truth is much better than seeking it.

And then, Are you seeking for it as a man seeks for hidden treasure? It is always rather pathetic to see those people toiling in Tobermory, diving down for the treasure that is supposed to be hidden in the *Almirante de Florencia*, a treasure-ship of the Spanish Armada. But that is an illustration of the way in which we are to dig with earnestness in our

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

search for the hidden treasure of truth. How much time do you really spend in getting to know the Truth? I know you are very busy, but I am perfectly certain that you could spend more time in your search for the Truth.

Let me ask you another question: Are you all confirmed? You know the gift of the Holy Spirit is associated with the laying on of hands, and we Bishops could not go on, sometimes day after day, with our Confirmation services, if we did not really believe that the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed on those who are thus seeking Him in Confirmation. You are never too old to be confirmed; and remember that is a definite step to take if you want to know the Truth.

And the last question I would ask you is this: Are you a regular Communicant? That hour spent at the Communion ought to be one of the most glorious hours of our lives. Some may ask, How often should I go to Holy Communion? I think that every Sunday morning at least an earnest Christian ought to partake of the Holy Commun-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

ion. Sunday is the first day of the week, and it is the Lord's Day. And I do feel myself that we are losing much, and not gaining the hold upon the Truth which we might, if we are not regular Communicants. But in your search for the Truth do not feel that your efforts are confined to attending Holy Communion. Christ said, "I am the Truth," and His illustration was a very striking one. He spoke of the house that was built on the sand and the house that was built on the rock. The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew upon that house built upon the sand, and it fell. But the other house was built upon the rock, and when the rain descended and the floods came, it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock, and that rock was Christ.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS¹

Q. Here is a question that I have received from one who says he is an atheist. "Does the sun come up by accident every morning? Is it an

¹ St. John's Church, Hackney, Wednesday evening.

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

accident that the moon shines every night? I believe that the whole universe is governed by mathematical laws. If there is a God, He Himself is subject to these laws. For millions of years the sun was revolving with a huge velocity, and this, combined with the tremendous heat of the sun, itself caused a small fragment of the sun to be broken off. This went on revolving with the velocity due to the sun, and as the flaming fragment hardened, it became a sphere. Gradually the crust of this sphere hardened, and the earth cooled enough for it to be occupied by human beings. It has been proved and accepted that man evolved from the lowest kinds of plant and animal life. Thus, although man is no accident, he is certainly not put there by any universal mind. If a God had wanted to create a human creature, He could have done so millions of years before. We know from astronomy that the earth is only one of thousands of similar bodies all whirling round the sun. Each of these is probably inhabited in the same way as the earth, with millions of

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

people. It is inconceivable that each of these earths has its own God to watch over it, and thus the one God must watch over all. Imagine a Deity sitting on high, watching thousands of spheres rotating below it, each inhabited by millions of people; every action of each person on each sphere is supervised by this God, and also every prayer and wish of each person is answered immediately! This need not be pursued further, it is simply absurd. As for the stars, sun, and moon, it is a fact that the sun does not rise every morning, nor the moon or stars come out every night. As all the spheres in space revolve, they cross each other's paths of vision, and the light of the sun sometimes shines on the front of the earth, sometimes on the back. If there were a God, the movements of every body in space would be wholly dependent on God's will—therefore an accident of will. On the contrary, every sphere has had its path traced out by mathematicians, and follows the same path century after century—not an accident therefore?"

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

A. I think the best way for me to answer that question would be for me to analyse those difficulties into *five points*, which you will find in these objections of our atheist friend.

(1) The first is, that the universe is *governed by mathematical laws, and that God is subject to those laws*. But is He? It is all very well to talk about mathematical laws, but who made them? The atoms of the world could never have formed themselves into these mathematical laws. There must be a great Mind working behind all the laws of nature. Of course God does work by laws, but He is not governed by them. What a terrible thing it would be if we did not know whether a fire was going to burn or not, or whether the harvests were going to ripen or not. What science calls the uniformity of nature, faith calls the fidelity of God. But the fact that the universe is governed by mathematical laws does not mean that God Himself is subject to His own laws.

(2) Secondly, our friend speaks about the cooling of the earth making it *habitable for human beings*. Now, Evolution does not do away with the necessity of God. In all probability the moon was taken from the centre of the earth. The whole question of Evolution is very interesting, but it does not for a single moment do away with the fact that behind it all there is an Eternal Mind at

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

work. However the earth was evolved, and however man was made, the fact remains that the sun gives us light by day and the moon by night. These facts only prove that behind all things there is a creative Mind at work.

(3) Then the third point, that *man was evolved from the lower animals*. The bodies of mankind were slowly evolved for millions of years through the lower creation, but what we believe is that there came a moment, which is described in picture form in the Book of Genesis, when God breathed into the body of man the breath of life, and man became a living soul, and when he was given those attributes which distinguish him from the animals. Man prays, he can look behind and before, he has a self-consciousness. He is a free, personal spirit. He is made in God's image. But that does not in the least contradict the fact that the body of man has been slowly evolved from the animal creation. And as to the other spheres, there is no *proof* at all that the other planets are inhabited. It is said that the moon is so dead that no life could possibly exist on it.

(4) Then to turn to the fourth point, and consider *the millions living upon the earth to-day*. Of course no super-man, if we think of God merely as a super-man, could govern such a world. Man is always finite, but God is infinite. I teach, and I

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

ask you to believe for your own comfort, that when you kneel down to pray you have got *all* of God to attend to you, because being infinite He can give Himself wholly to each.

(5) The last point raised by our atheist friend is that because *the movements of the world are regular, therefore they are not of God*. That does not follow at all. Herschel, the great astronomer, said, "The laws of nature require a continual application of force." And that gives the emphasis to our Lord's words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." We see God at work in nature.

Q. If we never talk of God to our own people, but pray very earnestly for them, can we feel that our prayer will never fail?

A. It is very difficult to talk at home about religion, especially when the rest of the family do not go to church, and to pray for them is very often the only thing to do. It is not wise to be always pressing spiritual advice upon people. But it is possible to pray for them, and then often an opening comes; and when the door is opened for you by the Holy Spirit, then buy up the opportunity.

Q. Can our dead who never professed any religion on earth be saved by our prayers?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

A. We really do not know how far our prayers for the dead avail in the other world, but what we do believe is that we are perfectly justified in praying for them. The new Prayer Book has several beautiful prayers for them. But whether we can save by our prayers those who would be lost, as it were, without them, I could not possibly presume to say, because we are not told. "There is a sin unto death," says St. John; "I do not say that he shall pray for it." What I do believe is that very many good men and women who have not been able to believe in Jesus Christ here on earth will believe in Him in that other world. I know of many good people here, in the case of whom there seems to be a veil between them and Christ.

Q. Are we saved for ever from our sins if we trust Christ, in spite of doubts and fears?

A. We can only remember that beautiful promise that he who endures to the end shall be saved, and I think we may put our trust in the One Who made the promise.

Q. If we live a lonely life, not speaking to anyone, but going quite alone, can we be sure of salvation?

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

A. But are we alone? That's the point. I always think that a beautiful thing which our Lord said, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Loneliness is sometimes used as a sacrament to unite us to the lonely Christ. He lived a very lonely life; you cannot help seeing that. His disciples did not understand Him. He was hated by the religious people of His day, and He had many enemies. The thought of Christ's loneliness should help those who often feel themselves to be lonely.

Q. Is salvation really free?—no giving, no doing, just an acceptance of Christ?

A. As a beginning it certainly is. That is to say, we are not saved by any merit of our own, or by any exertion on our part. The glory of the Gospel is free pardon for our sins. But it must issue in a Christlike life. "By grace are ye saved through faith." You make your confession of sin, and you plead His sacrifice. That is the first step in the Christian life. But when you have done that, God expects to see a change in your life. Religion is not the easy thing that some people seem to think it. It is not only accepting the Atonement that has been made, but it is by the diligent use of the grace at our disposal.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Q. How can the fear of death be overcome?

A. The fear of death can be overcome because Christ has said, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." I have visited many hundreds of dying people, and those who have trusted in Christ have never been afraid to die. What I feel is that as God gives us grace to live by, so He gives us grace to die by. I remember one young girl, saying to me one day, "*I am* afraid of death; I seem to see it like a great shadow descending upon me." And I said, "Well, you would trust me to carry you into the next room, wouldn't you?" "Yes," she replied. "Then trust Christ, Who will carry you safely into the next room." When I saw her the next time she was dead, with a smile on her face.

Q. Why confess your sins to a priest? When Christ said, "Whosoever sins ye remit" (which is the only Scriptural support of the above statement), He was addressing Christians, not ordained ministers, so why go to a priest? 1 John i. 9 says, "He [Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," not a mere man as a priest is.

A. That question involves us in the whole doctrine of the priesthood, and that is most beautifully

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

put before us in Canon Moberley's book *Ministerial Priesthood*. That book explains very clearly what the doctrine of the priesthood is in the Church of England. There is only one High Priest, and that is Jesus Christ Himself. But the whole Church is the Body of Christ, and therefore the whole Church is priestly, and the ordained priests are the organs of that priestly Body, therefore they have the commission to pronounce in Christ's Name the absolution. They cannot give absolution *from themselves*, but they pronounce it to those who are penitent. The priest has only got authority because he represents the great High Priest Himself.

Q. You implied that the rocks were as much the Word of God as the Scriptures. Where does God say this? God says in His Word, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16). You cannot build your faith upon a mere material object, but you can upon the Word of God, for that is spiritual and life.

A. I think you misunderstood what I said. You learn truth from the rocks, because they have existed for many thousands of years. I believe

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that we learn from geology the truth of God, and wherever truth is, it must be the truth of God. I did not for a moment suggest that we could get as much good from geology as from the Bible itself.

Q. We are told that the help of the Holy Spirit can be obtained by prayer. How can we gain assurance that we are really getting His help when so often the result of our prayers seems to be a blank?

A. That is a very common difficulty. But do not confuse faith and feeling. It does not follow that because you feel hard and cold that therefore your prayers are not heard. We are saved by faith, not by feeling.

Q. In what way could you say that a person would be happy by becoming a true Christian? Would it not depend on circumstances and surroundings? Was Christ happy? Did He not warn others of the sorrow and suffering they would have if they faithfully followed Him? What proof is there that a loving God takes an interest in any one of us? From what I can see, we seem to have

HOW TO KNOW THE TRUTH

been thrown among two great forces, which are striving for mastery, and left to do our best or worst. Why should some have too much of the one? When we are faced with difficulties, we have to find the best way out ourselves. That is my experience. If Christ is the Truth, why has the Church failed?

A. I entirely disagree with this questioner that Christ had no joy. It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the Cross. We must remember that this underlying joy is one of the greatest things in the world. I believe you will find that in exact proportion as any of us seek to follow Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, so we are made happy. We may have our difficulties and temptations and trials, but there will be a deep, underlying joy that nothing can take away. I believe that the loving God does take an interest in every one of us. In the midst of all the difficulties and mysteries of life, we have in our hands one little candle, and that is what Christ has brought us, and it is the revelation that God *does* take an interest in us.

Q. How is it that a person who is known to be wicked and sinful in every possible way yet enjoys

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

good health and appears to be free from worry and anxiety, while a good Christian man or woman, always ready to do good, and a good Church worker, etc., always has bad health, and much anxiety, and worry?

A. I do not agree that a good Christian does always have bad health and much anxiety. He certainly does have his trials. And I do not agree that the wicked person always has good health. Those who have everything that the world can give them are not always truly happy. I have found again and again that underneath there is a sort of restlessness. And your Christian worker, even if he has bad health to struggle against, has wonderful peace and joy which nothing can rob him of. All I can say is, Try it. Those who follow Christ faithfully are happy people, and those who do not follow Him, but who turn their backs upon Him, are almost invariably restless and dissatisfied.

CHAPTER VIII

GLORYING IN THE CROSS¹

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Gal. vi. 14.

WE are trying to answer a very important question in this East London Mission, "Why am I a Christian?" Let us to-night study that question in the light of the Cross, for it is when we face the Cross that difficulties arise.

I believe that the most serious thing we have to face to-day in a district like this, where you have heard the Gospel preached all your lives, is that you may get too familiar with the whole tragic story; in other words, that you may get Gospel-hardened. We do not realize the tragedy of the Cross. Remember that the Cross was raised only a few feet from the ground, and not

¹ St. Mary's Church, Stoke Newington.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

high and lifted up far above those who passed to and fro jeering at Him Who hung there. Picture the best Man Who ever lived hanging there, One Who had done no wrong. "Why, what evil hath He done?" asked Pilate. The Crucifixion is such a disgrace to human nature, it is such a condemnation to the whole human race, that we shall never be able to live it down. Oh, do not let us get *accustomed* to the tragedy of the Cross.

When we think of those people—and we might have been amongst them—walking up and down and gibing at the Friend of sinners, at the Friend of little children, at the Perfect Man Who had not one flaw in His character, do we not blush at the thought? The Cross, as you might expect, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, who had the idea of a far-away God Who could not possibly be crucified; and to the pleasure loving Greeks the whole story seemed absurd. To them Christ was just an enthusiastic young man Who had come up against His countrymen, and

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

the laws of the Romans, and public opinion, and Who was suffering the penalty. And you will find to-day that there are those who share the Jewish point of view of a far-away God Who would not come into the world to suffer, and to whom the thought is almost blasphemy; while to those pleasure-loving people whose one idea is to have a good time, to them the Cross is foolishness. They spend Good Friday playing golf or football, and try to forget all that for which the day stands. But St. Paul (or Saul as he was before he was converted) was a Jew by birth, and a Greek by education, and yet there came a time in his life when he actually knelt at the foot of the Cross and confessed "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." And he also uttered this wonderful declaration, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." This man who had gloried in so many things—in being a Roman citizen, in being a strict Pharisee, who gloried in his education—yet learned to glory only in the Cross.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

We are bound, then, to ask to-night what St. Paul saw in the Cross which made him glory in it to the exclusion of everything else.

(1) In the first place he saw in it *a very necessary proof of the love of God*. Have you ever tried to defend the character of God in a large audience when there are present those who bring up, for instance, the Japanese earthquake with all its tremendous loss of life and property? I have had to face such an audience many a time in Victoria Park, and I have had to answer the Secularist who used to say from his stand opposite mine, "Look at East London with all its poverty. Either God does not care, in which case He is not love, or He cannot do anything, in which case He is not almighty." How are you going to prove that God does care and does love His children? You can say a great deal about the beneficence of God as seen in the sunshine and in the flowers. You can say a great deal about the delightful character of home life. Then you will be reminded of the animals preying on one another in the jungle. And

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

you have to listen to the other side on the moral question. A Provost-Marshal during the War told me that he had no idea of the appalling wickedness of London till he became Provost-Marshal. You must, therefore, have some further answer ready.

I feel that if I am going to pray in faith every day to a loving God, I have got to have some proof that He is loving—a stronger proof even than that which Nature provides in the sunshine and the flowers. St. Paul believed that he had that proof. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," and you can almost feel his heart breaking as he says it. Surely here was a standing proof of the love of God which no one could refute. Have you grasped the truth of that thought? Do you realize that you personally are loved by God like that, that He loved you and gave Himself for you? And, if so, what have you done for Him in return?

I daresay in this great congregation there are many sad hearts to-day. Perhaps there is one ailing in the home, or there is a child about whom

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

you are anxious. Perhaps something is troubling your own heart, signs of approaching physical weakness, or something wrong in your business. But I feel certain of this, that you want as much as any of us this conviction, which the Cross alone will give you, that God does love you, and that He does love the world. If you say He *could* not have suffered for you as He did, then I would remind you about your own boys. I think of the Stoke Newington boys in my old regiment, the London Rifle Brigade, who gave their lives. If they were willing to give their lives for their country, then surely it is possible to believe that Christ was willing to give His life for the sake of the world. As Browning says in his beautiful poem, "Saul,"

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldest
Thou—so wilt Thou!"

"Else here the parts change; here the creature sur-
passes the Creator."

That is what David felt when he wanted to help Saul in his agony. The creature cannot be nobler

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

than the Creator, and, therefore, we are driven to believe that this tremendous thing really happened, and that God did this, and if He did this, then He loves you and me.

(2) Then, secondly, St. Paul saw in the Cross *his one chance of being forgiven*. With all our admiration for St. Paul, we do not wonder that he felt that he had been a great sinner; he had done terrible things while at the same time thinking he was doing God service. He had been responsible for the imprisonment of innocent men and women, and he had encouraged those who stoned Stephen to death. You cannot wonder that after his conversion St. Paul felt he was the chief of sinners, and no doubt it was difficult for him to believe that he could be forgiven, and you can see in all his writings how thankful and grateful he was that, through the Cross, he could be forgiven.

At some of my missions I have had most strange things happen, which have convinced me that we do not all realize what sin is. After my first sermon

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

at a mission a boy came into the vestry and flung himself down in a paroxysm of grief because he had been guilty once of breaking the seventh commandment, and I could not convince him that he could be forgiven until I took him by the hand and knelt with him in front of the Cross; and then the truth of God's pardon in Christ at last flashed into his soul. On another occasion there was a girl who had been made to sin against her will, and she found it hard to believe that she could be forgiven. It took me half an hour to convince her, and it was not until she knelt at the foot of the Cross that the truth of God's forgiveness dawned upon her, and into her face there came a look of most wonderful peace and joy.

But is there not a danger that we may take it all rather for granted, that we may think that we can be too easily forgiven? I, for one, should be very sorry if I could not kneel at the foot of the Cross and ask God to forgive me, for Christ's sake, all the shortcomings and sins of thought and word and deed in my life, and I hope that you

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

kneel there too. Make no mistake about it, "there is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we may be saved." This is the Gospel which has been handed down to us these two thousand years, that we cannot be forgiven except through Jesus Christ our Lord. If we would have a happy Easter, if we would tread the true way of peace, we must look into the past, we must take the Ten Commandments as interpreted in the New Testament, and, with the aid of the Holy Spirit to guide us, make that full and frank confession to God of all our sins that we may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot tell you how much our future happiness depends upon that.

(3) And then, thirdly, St. Paul saw the Cross *as a standing rebuke to three things that curse life*—pride, lust, and respectable selfishness. Just think of the unhappiness that pride produces in social life and in family life. You are not willing to make up that quarrel because you are too proud to take that first step. It is extraordinary how

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

pride rusts all good gifts. Once let a man or woman be conceited about their gifts, and the rust begins to appear in a moment. I have seen this egotism creeping even over old men, and I think it is more pitiful to see it in old men than in young men. It undermines their influence, and spoils all their good work. Now I ask you, Is it possible really to believe in the Cross and to remain proud?

“When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

When you think that He was Lord of the angels, and Captain of the Heavenly hosts and gave up everything to die upon the Cross, I defy you to be proud if you believe that. Let us mortify our pride.

Then, again, what terrible mischief lust does in all its forms, call it by any other name you like. But when you see the perfect control of the Perfect Man, with His Body bruised and beaten on the Cross, it is a terrible rebuke to human lust. There

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

is all the difference in the world between pure love and lust. As Shakespeare says:

“Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust’s effect is tempest after sun;
Love’s gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust’s winter comes ere summer half be done.”

And then, what about respectable selfishness. I do not suppose I am speaking to any here to-night who are guilty of great crimes, but, oh, how selfish our lives are! I know that in some lives there is tennis, bridge—bridge, tennis, and that is how they spend their lives; but even those who have to earn their own living, how self-centred their lives are! Has the Cross ever made you do what you would not have done if there had been no Cross? What makes me ashamed of myself is when I see people like Miss Riddell, living for thirty years among the lepers of Japan, or when I see a Sunday-school teacher from Carlisle leaving this country to live for Christ in British Columbia, being prepared to suffer hardship for His sake; or when I think of men like Father Wainwright, who

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

lived for Christ in East London for fifty-five years. It is the thought of such lives that makes me feel ashamed of myself. I do try to be a hard worker, but I work in comfort compared to those who have sacrificed so much. And, therefore, I want you to ask yourself, Is not the Cross a rebuke to my respectable selfishness? Cannot I do something more? How much do I give, for instance, to the support of the Church? Do I spend all my money on myself? How much time do I spend in prayer and in intercession? How much time do I spend in cultivating my religious life compared with the time that I spend in making money and in attending to my business? I believe the Cross is a standing rebuke to pride, lust, and respectable selfishness.

(4) Then this brings us to the fourth thing. St. Paul saw that the Cross was *the inevitable path which the Christian was expected to tread*. You find people who almost lose their faith if anything wrong happens to them. If they have some misfortune in business, if an accident occurs, if they

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

are lonely, or if they find their work hard and uncongenial, they almost give up believing in God. When anyone says to me, "I never have my prayer answered," I generally find on inquiry that it is some selfish request that they have made to God, and because that particular prayer was not answered they have given up believing in God. We must realize that if we are going to see Jesus Christ with the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and to hear Him say, "This have I done for thee," we must not be afraid to suffer for Him. The earth on which we live has been called "the star of suffering"; it is only here that we have the chance of suffering with Christ. Therefore do let us remember that if the cross on our foreheads at our baptism means anything, and if we look at the Cross and call ourselves Christians, we must with far more serenity and courage take up our cross and follow Christ.

(5) Lastly, St. Paul saw that the Cross *broke down the barriers between race and race, between Jew and Gentile, and between man and woman.*

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

As I look round the world, I see that nothing else will ever do it. I had the great happiness in Colombo of giving the Holy Communion one morning to representatives of five different races. They all knelt there at the foot of the Cross to receive the Body broken and the Blood shed. If there is going to be one day a great brotherhood of nations, there is only one thing that is going to bring it about, and that is the Cross. Only the Cross can break down the barriers that exist. We have got to pray for the peace of the world, and for the peace of the Church, and for peace among the nations, and it can only be done through the Cross.

I want to ask you to-night to keep Holy Week as you have never kept it before. When Moses saw the burning bush, he said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." Let us turn aside and gaze upon this sight which is far more wonderful than the burning bush. Here is the Lord of life dying, and yet, apparently consumed by suffering, there is a "wall

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

of fire’’¹ round the world. The bush is not consumed. Why is the bush not consumed? What is the meaning of this extraordinary sight? Come this week and watch the burning bush and see why it is not consumed, and pray that you may be shown the meaning of it. And when you find that the Cross is the only true demonstration of the love of God and the only means by which you can be forgiven, and that it is a standing rebuke to those evils which exist in the world, that it is the pathway to a Christian life and the road to the peace of the world, you will say, “I am thankful for the many things that God has given me, but I will not glory in them; ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’ ”

¹ *The Wall of Fire*, by Rev. Stacey Waddy, Secretary of the S.P.G.

CHAPTER IX

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE¹

IN this Instruction I want to carry on the thought of the Cross which we were considering together on Sunday. We are saved by the fact of the Cross, and not by any theory about it. I think I have read all the main books written on the subject of the Atonement, but, to my mind, they are all unsatisfactory, because they all deal with a great event which is beyond human understanding. How can we expect to know what was in the mind of God when He decreed in the counsels of the Eternal that His Son should come to this earth and die for human sin? It is beyond human understanding.

“No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his wondering eye
At mysteries so bright.”

¹ St. Mary's Church, Stoke Newington, Wednesday evening.

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

This is one of the mysteries of life. I want to-night to ask a question, and to do my best to answer it, *Why did Jesus Christ have to die?* Now, you have no idea, unless you have had much to do with questioners and with doubters, how very difficult that question is, and how many different answers have been given to it.

Why did Jesus Christ have to die?

(1) The first thing to be quite clear about is this—it was *a voluntary death*. “No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” Quite clearly Christ need not have died. I always defend what are called the orthodox Modernists, and I think they are very often misunderstood. They thoroughly believe in modern criticism and want to take advantage of all that can be learned about the inscriptions from Egypt and other discoveries; in fact, they are the people who put together the new Commentary. We ought to be most grateful to these great scholars like Bishop Gore and others who have thrown so much light upon the Bible.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Old difficulties disappear in the light of modern criticism and a knowledge of the Bible. But there is a Modernism which is absolutely undermining the Christian faith, and that is that sort of Modernism which looks on Jesus Christ as a mere man Who set Himself up against the religion of His day, and Who incurred the indignation of the Romans, and so was put to death. Therefore I say quite clearly that I believe it to be an integral part of the Christian faith that the death of Christ was a voluntary death. That is the first point I want to make quite plain.

(2) Then the second thing I would say is this—*that He really did die*. There were many explanations about the Resurrection current in Germany and other places. I was in Germany for at least a couple of years before I was ordained, and I heard all the things that were said there to explain away the Resurrection of Christ. But we must be perfectly sure that Jesus Christ really did die upon the Cross. It is a great help to our faith to know that the spear was thrust into His side,

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

and that there came out blood and water, which was a certain proof that He was dead. All this idea of a swoon theory is absolutely absurd. Certainly no one creeping back to life in a kind of weak, invalid condition could have made the impression that the Risen Christ made upon the world.

(3) The third point is that *the fact of His dying is recorded in history*. I remember in my own young days, when I had to think things out, what a relief it was to find that Jesus Christ's death was actually recorded in Tacitus, who says that "Jesus Christ was put to death in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius." So that the Roman historian in that passage does show that Jesus Christ was an historical character. Tacitus went on to say that Christianity was a mischievous superstition, but that does not interfere with his witness to the reality of the event as recorded in Roman history.

This all brings us back to the point, Why did Jesus Christ have to die? And out of all the books

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

on the subject which I have read I think the great Nonconformist, Dr. Dale, most closely hits the mark. He certainly explained it more clearly than anyone else to my youthful mind.

(1) *The law of holiness had to be kept.* "With the clean thou shalt be clean, and with the holy thou must learn holiness." That was the great law of God's universe, and you cannot lower it. If God had lowered it, the whole moral standard of the universe would have gone down. For instance, if a judge was to let off every prisoner who came before him, how long would the moral standard of England be kept up? The law has got to be respected, and the moral standard of God's universe must be kept up; and someone must perfectly fulfil this law of holiness which God has laid down. But when God looked down from Heaven, He saw that there was "none that doeth good, no, not one." There was no one who perfectly fulfilled the law of holiness. That was the moment when the Son said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He, as it were,

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

leapt from Heaven to earth, and He to Whom all judgment had been committed, and Who had to judge the guilt of the world, came down Himself to perfectly fulfil the broken law of holiness and to do perfectly the will of God; and what we see narrated in the New Testament is a perfect fulfilling of the will of God.

It was not only His death upon the Cross on Good Friday, but it was the living of a perfect life first. Our Lord, Who was the humblest person that ever lived, said on one occasion, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" No one has ever been able to point out a flaw in the life and character of Jesus Christ. John Stuart Mill, a sceptic so far as accepting a full belief was concerned, said to the young men of his day, "Live so that Jesus Christ would approve of your life." What a tribute to the character of Jesus Christ! "Make Jesus Christ the moral standard of your life." Lecky, the great historian, says, "The record of those three short years have done more to regenerate mankind

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the plans of statesmen." This life of Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the will of God and satisfied the broken law of God. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" was the verdict from on high.

(2) This brings me to my next point, that in order to fulfil the broken law He had to die because *this fulfilling of the perfect law of God brought Him up against the wickedness of mankind*, it brought Him up against the pride of Caiaphas, the cupidity of Annas, and the national boastfulness of the Jews, who thought that by having a worldly Messiah and King they would be able to wrest the kingdom from the Romans; it also brought him up against the cowardice of Pilate, who was not prepared to risk his recall to Rome, and so he condemned Christ to be crucified. This perfect fulfilling of the broken law of God brought Him up against all the forces of evil which were dominant in the world at that time, and He had to die that He might fulfil that

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

law. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" said the crowd, and Pilate finally yielded to them and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person." So you see that it was this perfect fulfilling of the law of God which brought about His death.

(3) Now we go a little farther and we ask, *How does all this affect us?* Why do we imagine that we poor sinners have got anything whatever to gain through the merits of another? There are those who think that the Atonement is immoral; they do not see why we should be saved because of Another Who was very good. But wait a moment. What did He do when He came to earth? He came to make Himself one with us. "Nearer is He than breathing, closer than hands and feet." He became Man; that is the glory of the Incarnation. That is why all these theories about a Good Man fail to bring comfort to anybody. There is no atonement for us save in the One Who was Son of God and Son of man. He became actually one with us,

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

and just as in the old days, when the general came round, those who were in prison were let out for the sake of the good name of the regiment, so we plead the Name of One Who has actually become our Elder Brother, and Who has made a perfect atonement for us. We come then to the mercy-seat and we plead for the forgiveness of our sins in His Name and for His sake, remembering the condition that we are to remain one with Him, and to do all that we can to increase that oneness by prayer and sacrament. If the penitent thief had lived, he would have been a changed man.

Many people totally misrepresent the Christian faith. It is not simply pleading the name of Jesus Christ, and then doing nothing more. We do not plead any merits of our own, we plead the one Sacrifice; but it is on the understanding that we are going on to live up to what we have professed. We have got to be one with Him. This thought is brought out in the Sacraments of the Church. We are baptized into the Church

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

and we receive remission of our sins. It is not a question of the Church dragging along a number of people to safety against their will, but they have got to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

(4) But now turn to a second reason. When I was meditating this morning and studying Bishop Walpole's new book, *The Triumph of Love*, which was brought out three weeks before he died, I read it with great attention as the last words of an old friend. He takes the Epistles and the Gospels for every day of Holy Week, and gives a special message. He dwells upon the zeal of our Lord; and His wonderful patience and meekness; and he also deals with the thought of the blood of the Covenant. He says truly that that word "covenant" conveys very little to us; we connect it with some uninteresting old legal documents. But the Bishop insists that just as Mary said that Calais would be written

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

on her heart, and "Leper" was written on Father Damien's heart, and "Melanesia" on Bishop Paterson's heart, so "Covenant" would be written upon our Lord's heart, not only because He loved the old covenant—"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"—but He had given the seal of a new covenant. "This is My Blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many." There was the old covenant which Moses had made and had sprinkled with the blood, but that was broken, and therefore there had to be a new covenant for mankind made with God. Jesus Christ made this new covenant, and He was going to seal this new covenant, not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with His own blood.

He gives a striking illustration of how Stanley, when he was on his way to find Livingstone, made a blood covenant with a wild chief. Their arms were cut, and the blood was allowed to flow from one to the other, and that was a binding covenant between them. Our Lord was set on

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

making a new covenant between God and the human race, and He could only do it by sealing it with His blood. The old covenant was sealed with the blood of bulls and of goats, but our Lord was sent to seal the new covenant with His own blood. "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." Therefore if our Lord was set upon that, He could only seal this new covenant with His own blood. That was the second reason why He had to die.

Then He takes His own sacrifice, and pleads His sacrifice within the veil. And at the Holy Communion, just as our Lord pleads His own sacrifice in Heaven, so the priest pleads the Sacrifice here on earth.

Now, what effect has this on our lives to-day? I do not know whether you have been interested in what I have said; it is one of the most difficult questions in religion. I should like to ask these questions of you all: Do we take in what is *expected of us as sons of God?* Have we any idea

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

of the kind of life we should be living? Some say, "Oh, human nature is human nature, but God has called us to His own kingdom and glory, and we are *expected*, as sons of God, to live noble lives. We are all expecting to live with God for ever, and that is a very noble destiny. But are we preparing for it in any way? There are those who think that it will be all right if at the very end of life they turn to Christ for mercy, and that, after having lived a life of sin, they will be thereby transported to Heaven. But you cannot change character like that. There must be preparation here and now for that life beyond, if we are to enjoy the holy companionship of God and His holy angels. Do we all realize how much we fail? What is our life compared with the standard up to which we ought to be living? The very highest is expected of us as sons and daughters of God, and yet how we fail! I would like you to think over that. Do we realize what it cost to redeem us? There is a story of one poor girl who had sinned, and

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

it was not until she saw that her mother's hair had turned white in one night that she understood just what her wrong-doing had meant to the one who loved her. Now, when we look at the Cross on Good Friday, it ought to bring home to us the awfulness of sin. Nothing in the world so brings home to us what sin really is as does the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, again, if you are conscious of the great salvation that has been wrought for us in the death of Christ, you have got to put out the hand of faith and accept it, to believe God's word that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" if we confess them to Him. Let us think of these solemn things between now and Good Friday. Repentance consists of five steps—confession, restitution, amendment, contrition, and acceptance. That is to say, with confession of sin there must be restitution, with the confession of sin to God there must be the confession of sin to the one against whom you have sinned. If you have told an un-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

true story about anyone, you must go and put that right again. That is the test of the reality of your repentance. There must be amendment, and there must also be contrition, which is sorrow for sin that has been forgiven. There must be the full acceptance of the great salvation. Take the Ten Commandments, and interpret them in the light of New Testament teaching, and go through your lives and see where you have failed.

Confession in the Church of England is left free to the individual conscience. But if you had seen, as I have, the effect on the lives of those who had received Absolution, and of the peace that has come into their lives, you would never talk about Confession as a thing associated only with the Roman Catholic Church. It is in our own Prayer Book.¹ Our good Mother

¹ Exhortation in the Communion Service.

“And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, if by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God’s Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God’s Holy Word he may receive the

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

Church allows it, and encourages those who feel their need of it to seek the help of a priest in the confession of their sins to God. May we all kneel at the foot of the Cross and receive from Christ the full remission of our sins, then shall we indeed be able to say with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. I find it is a standing rebuke to all we profess, to see the condition of the Church of St. James in the Pentonville Road, between Cumming Street and Rodney Street. It is in a dreadful state with broken windows, but "GOD IS LOVE" over the door. It all seems a terrible mockery. The public-houses and adjoining factory all spruce and cared for, but the House of God near at hand falling to pieces!

benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

A. In reply to that, let me say that the church has been condemned as a dangerous structure by the London County Council, and is in process of being pulled down. The people who attended there have been transferred to another church close by, and the two parishes have been united. I can quite understand that anyone, not knowing the circumstances, would be inclined to think that there was some neglect on the part of the Church. But the site of the church is being sold, and the money used for planting another church in the suburbs, where so many people are now congregating.

Q. What is the lesson of the Cross to one who is very unhappy in the home? Is it wrong to leave the family circle in which a parent's influence is crushing and masterful, a home in which fear dwells, and not love?

A. Well, of course, everything depends upon the circumstances. I have known of a number of cases where the poor daughter lives a miserable life, but she endures it for the sake of her mother, who otherwise would be left alone. There are homes where the father is domineering and masterful and makes the home miserable. If it be possible, without there being any breach

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

of filial duty, for a daughter to leave home, I think it would be far better for her to do so. Where the father is so unsympathetic and difficult, he forfeits his right to having his daughter remaining in the home.

Q. What does the Creed mean by the "resurrection of the body"? That our actual body should rise again seems absurd, yet we are told Christ's body rose again.

A. That, of course, is a very common difficulty, but you cannot argue and say that what happened to our Lord is also going to happen to us. The disciples when they looked into the tomb on the Resurrection morning saw the clothes lying and the turban-like wrapping that had been about His head lying in a place by itself, the explanation being that the Body had risen through the clothes, and our Lord appeared unto them later in a bodily form with the marks of the nails in His hands and feet. But *our* bodies perish in the tomb, and the particles which form the body become part of mother earth. When we say that the body will rise again, we mean the spiritual body. "*There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*" The best illustration is that of the seed and the

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

stalk given to us by St. Paul. You plant the seed, and later on it grows until the golden grain appears. And so St. Paul says, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." The answer to that question is that we are given a spiritual body in the other world, which is much more effective than our present physical body. As Charles Kingsley so beautifully puts it, it is such a comfort to know, especially in the case of those who are crippled or deformed in any way, that "new limbs are ready kept for us in the treasury of God."

"They will not spoil the love I try to speak,
They will fail my soul as these have done."

Q. "He descended into Hell." What does the Church of England teach about this? If "Hell," as used here, does not carry its usually accepted meaning, would it not be a good thing to reframe the Creeds, notably in this matter, and that stated in the previous question?

A. Perhaps it *is* misleading to keep the word "Hell" in the creed in that sense, but to every scholar "Hell" stands for the unseen world, and you will see that if you study, for instance,

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

Paterson Smyth's *People's Life of Christ*. The word in the old English form was used for a sort of shelter in a game into which the children ran to hide themselves. When Christ descended into Hell, He descended into the unseen world, into Hades, and there He gave to the spirits a message. The word as we have it in the Creed may be a little misleading, but I am afraid we cannot alter it now.

Q. Completion is of the essence of Deity. If the life within the Godhead were all-sufficient, why should a world outside it have been created?

A. That is quite a usual difficulty. But, as I have often explained, as God was perfectly happy in Himself, He wished us to share that happiness with Him, and so He said "Let there be light," and "Let there be life." And because He said that, we are alive to-day, and millions share the sunshine of His own happiness. He created mankind, not because He was not perfect in Himself, but because He wanted to spread the happiness which He Himself had. People talk about the misery of life, and say that God made a great mistake in creating men and women. But that is all nonsense. I know there are sorrows and difficulties in life, but nine-tenths of

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

them are caused by our sin. If you abolished in London to-day all sin, if you did away with drink, and impurity, and selfishness, and avarice, you would abolish nine-tenths of the misery of London. The shutting-up of the saloons in America has had a most extraordinary effect in doing away with the need for rescue homes; I believe several hundred of the prisons there have been closed as a result. And that is exactly what would occur in London if we did away with drink and immorality. God meant us to be happy, and if we only kept God's laws we should be far happier than we are.

Q. Do you consider that God the Father is capable of suffering?

A. You are not going to convince me that there is not a certain amount of suffering in love. Does a mother who sees her son going wrong not suffer? You cannot believe in the love of God without realizing that love suffers. We are sometimes apt to imagine that there are three Gods, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, but we know that there is only one God, and God suffered on the Cross. There must be a capacity for suffering on the part of God because He does love.

WHY JESUS CHRIST HAD TO DIE

Q. Do you believe that our Lord was impeccable as well as impeccable?

A. Because Christ did not sin, was He, therefore incapable of sinning? Our Lord in one sense could not have been truly tempted unless the temptation was a reality to Him, and many people say that if it was not a reality to Him He could not have been incapable of sinning. But it is only those who fully resist who feel the full force of temptation. If you fall, then you do not experience the full force of temptation. Now, our Lord experienced the full force of Satan's temptation, and yet did not fall; He could not fall because He was in full touch with God the Father. And yet temptation was a very real thing to Him.

CHAPTER X

CHRIST AS THE LIFE¹

"Then He said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."—St. Luke xxiv., 25-27.

Now, I have chosen out of all the possible Easter texts that particular one, for one reason, the word "ought"—"*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*" What would we not have given to have heard that lecture on the Old Testament by the Son of God! This is the great point to-night—He uses Himself this word "ought." "Ought you not to have expected all this? Why this surprise? It was the very thing that was bound to happen."

¹ St. Paul's Cathedral, Easter Sunday evening, March 31st, 1929.

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

I have just finished conducting a Mission during Lent in East London, and, as so often happens, when you see the Gospel in action you see things far more clearly than when you are just sitting, as it were, in an armchair. And two great convictions have come out of this Mission, not only to myself, but also, I believe, to those who have been following the various sermons and addresses.

I. The first is, that there are *two Christian religions in the world to-day*. The one is that there lived two thousand years ago a very good Man, Whose name was Jesus Christ, and Who taught many beautiful things and preached many beautiful sermons, of which the best was the Sermon on the Mount, and that if you try to live up to the precepts laid down in that Sermon on the Mount—which is not, by the way, an easy thing to do—you are a thorough-going Christian, and that you need not worry about the miracles, and that you need not worry even about your sins. The end of that story is that this Good Man lived before His time, that He

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

got across the teachers of the religion of His day, and that by playing upon the credulity and the fears of Pilate they got Him condemned, and that He was crucified, and that if He ever did appear again it could only have been in a spirit-form to His disciples. Now, if that is the Christian religion, then there is no "ought" about these things at all. Speaking for myself, if that is what I considered the Christian religion to be, I could never think of believing in the Virgin Birth, I should think there must be some mistake about the miracles, and I should feel very doubtful indeed about the Resurrection.

But now let us turn to what the original Christian religion really was. It must be certainly taught in the earliest Gospel, which is St. Mark's, and we notice that this Gospel simply bristles with miracles. It was also explained later on by St. John, or by the author of the Gospel of St. John (whom I still believe, with Bishop Gore and Bishop Westcott, to be St. John himself), and that Gospel bears the same relation

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

to the story of Jesus Christ in St. Mark as Plato's writings do to Xenophon's life of Socrates. St. John gives the inner meaning of the facts enumerated in St. Mark in those unforgettable words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." That is the original Christian religion which converted the world. Professor Cairns, in that most remarkable book of his, *The Faith that Rebels*—and you laymen might well read the works of that Aberdonian professor—points out that so far from the miracles being an accretion to the Gospel story, they form an integral part of the revelation, and that they convey to us the heart of the whole story. If you read the Professor's works you will find something in them that will immensely help your faith.¹

Now, if this is the story, if the Eternal Word came down and dwelt in human flesh, then we

¹ E.g. also *The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith*.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

should *expect* Him to come in some supernatural way, we should expect Him to have all power over life and death, we should not expect death to be able to hold Him. "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption"—that is exactly what was not allowed. His soul was not left in hell, and His body did not see corruption. "*Ought* not Christ to have suffered these things?" Ought we not to expect these things to happen? Why, of course we ought if we believe the truth. I know there are young men and women here who are trying to reconcile what they are learning in their science classrooms with their Bible. Let no one say that this is asking you to disregard law, because these things which you are asked to believe are worked by a higher law than we know.

I was listening over the wireless this afternoon when I had a few moments to spare to some beautiful music. Now, as you listen-in, and I am sure many of you do, do you realize that you are listening to something the laws of which

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

were unknown twenty-five years ago? It would have been considered impossible to those far-off days. And when one of the aborigines in Australia looks up into the sky and sees an aeroplane—and the Bishops in Australia are taking to aeroplanes now for their work—it seems to that untutored mind to be an absolute miracle to see men flying in the air. But it is *a miracle according to law*. It is a miracle worked by a knowledge of the laws of Nature, but fifty years ago such a thing was unknown. I mention these things to prove that no young man or woman studying in the science classrooms to-day need have the slightest feeling that anything he or she learns there can interfere with an intelligent reading of the Bible. The Bible has been misrepresented as teaching science, or astronomy, or geography. It has never claimed to do anything of the kind. Therefore when I say that we should expect the eternal Word of God, when He came, to have these supernatural powers, it does not mean for a single moment that He did not work according to law,

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

but by a higher law than we at present know ourselves.

This, then, is the first thought that has come out of this Lenten Mission, I trust to us all, that we have two religions, and that one of them, to my mind, is gravely inconsistent. How could One Who was but a man have stood up and said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"; "I am the Resurrection and the Life"; "No man knoweth the Father save the Son"? I cannot understand how such declarations could be consistent with anything that can be called humility. When, therefore, Jesus Christ, with His loving eyes, looked me in the face years ago as a young man, and said, "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" I thank God to-day I can look back after forty-five years' ministry, and say again as I said then, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

II. Now, the second thing which has come out of this Mission, and which will become clear

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

to every thinking person, I hope, is that *every one of the titles taken by our Lord on His own lips depends on the truth of the Resurrection*. Let us take one or two of them this evening. I hope that some of you read that Lenten book which was specially written for London by the Bishop of Pretoria, called *The Riddle of Life*. It was largely founded upon the works of the great Von Hügel. He pointed out all the mysteries by which we are surrounded. What a mystery life is! Where do we come from? and where are we going to? What a mystery death is! And what a mystery apparently undeserved suffering is! We are like people out on a dark common at night with only one little candle in our hands; that really is all we have got. That candle does not disperse all mystery. It is a great mistake to overstate our case. We are still surrounded by mysteries.

Have you ever thought of the complete darkness in which the disciples were plunged before Easter Day? They had not a ray of hope. The

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

holiest Man they had ever known and loved had been done to death, and God had not lifted a finger to help Him, and He was gone, and there was no hope in the midst of that darkness. And the light of that one little candle would most assuredly have gone out on Good Friday had there been no Resurrection to follow it. I am sure that we should have utterly despaired if we had been there. I should have despaired myself of ever being able to convince those who gathered in Victoria Park of the goodness and greatness of God unless there had been the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. And, therefore, so far as the light of the candle is concerned, it absolutely depends upon the Resurrection. As we hear to-day the glorious Easter message, "God raised Him from the dead," that message has put the candle on a candlestick that all the world may see, and for two thousand years Christ has been the Light of the World.

Then take another assertion, "I am the Way." It is not difficult *now* to show that He is the

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

Way to the knowledge of God, that we should know very little about God if it had not been for Christ, that He is the Way of access into God's presence, that He is the Way to happiness, and to holiness, and to prayer. But we should have been unable to prove the truth of this declaration of Christ's if there had been no Resurrection. We go down into the dark valley, but we see Christ Who is the Way, and we follow Him out of the darkness into the light of everlasting life. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Christ also said, "I am the Truth," and it is not easy even with the teaching of the Resurrection to substantiate that tremendous claim. When you think of all the millions of people who were looking for the truth, of all the philosophers who were searching for the truth, and the Wise Men watching for the star to appear in the heavens, you realize what a tremendous claim it is to say, "*I am the Truth.*" But could you convince for five minutes a number of critical

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

young people to-day that Jesus Christ was the Truth if He had never risen from the dead? Why, one of his great declarations would be at once disproved: "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Do you really imagine for a moment that our critical young people could accept Jesus Christ as the Truth when at the very first test He was found to fail?

And then lastly, and most palpably too, Christ declared, "I am the Life." There are those to-day all over the world who have been receiving their Communion to-day. They have believed that Jesus Christ is their life. I can picture those in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore Cathedrals, and in the great Cathedrals in Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth, and the great Cathedrals of New Zealand, thronged with people drinking in Christ as their Life. They have put their lips to the fountain of living water. But their faith is all

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

resting on the fact that Jesus Christ has broken the bands of death, as Samson broke the cords, that it was not possible for Him to be "holden of it." Once crush their belief in the truth of the Resurrection, and no longer can they believe in Christ as their life.

Therefore I say that every claim of Jesus Christ has as its pivot the Resurrection. "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*" And so I ask you tonight to see the naturalness of the supernatural, and the inevitableness of the miraculous, and *the Resurrection as the only consistent end of an otherwise inconsistent story*, and you will find then that everything will help you. You will find that you are only found worshipping in God's House on Sunday because Christ rose on the first day of the week, on which nothing happened except the Resurrection. When you come to the Holy Communion, and partake of the Body broken and the Blood shed, you celebrate the Resurrection with conscious joy, as for two thousand years

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

young people to-day that Jesus Christ was the Truth if He had never risen from the dead? Why, one of his great declarations would be at once disproved: "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Do you really imagine for a moment that our critical young people could accept Jesus Christ as the Truth when at the very first test He was found to fail?

And then lastly, and most palpably too, Christ declared, "I am the Life." There are those to-day all over the world who have been receiving their Communion to-day. They have believed that Jesus Christ is their life. I can picture those in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore Cathedrals, and in the great Cathedrals in Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth, and the great Cathedrals of New Zealand, thronged with people drinking in Christ as their Life. They have put their lips to the fountain of living water. But their faith is all

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

resting on the fact that Jesus Christ has broken the bands of death, as Samson broke the cords, that it was not possible for Him to be "holden of it." Once crush their belief in the truth of the Resurrection, and no longer can they believe in Christ as their life.

Therefore I say that every claim of Jesus Christ has as its pivot the Resurrection. "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*" And so I ask you to-night to see the naturalness of the supernatural, and the inevitableness of the miraculous, and *the Resurrection as the only consistent end of an otherwise inconsistent story*, and you will find then that everything will help you. You will find that you are only found worshipping in God's House on Sunday because Christ rose on the first day of the week, on which nothing happened except the Resurrection. When you come to the Holy Communion, and partake of the Body broken and the Blood shed, you celebrate the Resurrection with conscious joy, as for two thousand years

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that great event has been commemorated by the Christian Church. This would not have been possible if nothing had happened after the shameful death on the Cross. Could the Church have been started by the sight of a dead Peasant on a Cross Who never reappeared again? It is impossible. And still more, as we were reminded this morning,¹ in the risen life of every Christian that you know who has risen above his passion and his temper and his selfishness, you see again the Resurrection from the dead. Therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees. With Scripture and history and reason on your side, join in the great Easter anthem to-night, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and glory and blessing. For Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by His blood." And from the other world comes echoing back, "Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever."

¹ Easter sermon by the Dean.

CHAPTER XI

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

I HAVE done my best in the foregoing Mission Sermons, Instructions, and Answers to Questions to give my reason for being a Christian, but I feel that a great deal more should really be said than can be said in this spasmodic way to popular audiences. In America I often had from 1,000 to 4,000 young students listening to me night after night, sometimes for nearly an hour, and in what I am writing now I am going to try to reproduce, so far as I can remember, the "Christian Appeal" which I then addressed to them as the first holder of the Turner Exhibition, which was founded for the purpose of having a Christian Appeal as opposed to mere lectures made to the youth of America. In giving an answer to the vital question, "Why am I a Christian?" one has

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

to go back beyond the year in which our Lord was born, and to ask this question: What was it likely for God to desire to do after He had crowned His creation by the appearance of man upon the earth?

An Incarnation probable.

In spite of what is said in the papers, I did not find Fundamentalism strong in America, certainly not in the Universities. As a matter of fact, the theory of Evolution makes the Incarnation more probable than the old "Carpenter" theory of Creation did. The illustration of the impossibility of a box of letters throwing themselves into a play of Shakespeare, which I found made such a great impression on the crews of the battleships of the Grand Fleet, is all the more forcible if the atoms which constitute the world were gradually moulded into the world as it is to-day. It is only the crazy who can imagine that the world, as we see it to-day, could be made by accident. There is as clearly the mark of a Mind in the play presented by Nature as in the plays presented by

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Shakespeare. God, then, on any showing took an immense amount of trouble with the world, and by whatever method the world was made man is clearly the crown of Creation. What, then, is it likely that God would attempt to do next after taking all this infinite and agelong trouble in producing man? Surely He would attempt to reveal Himself to man in some intelligible form. The sunrise, the sunset, the sky, the flowers, have no object unless there is someone to appreciate them, and hence the creation of man. Man himself has no object, from God's point of view, unless he can respond to God's love and appreciate His character, and be fit to be His companion through all eternity.

How could God make Himself known to man?

Now, the moment one has realized that God would be sure to reveal Himself to mankind, the Incarnation becomes probable. How do we get to know anyone except personally? How can character be revealed except through a person?

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

If, therefore, it was possible for revelation to come through a Person, this would clearly be the best and most efficacious means of revelation.

The Incarnation dimly prophesied.

The idea that this might possibly happen was dimly prophesied for many years. What is often quoted as disproving the truth of the Incarnation is really a proof of its probability. Those Theophanies so often described in ancient literature, the very prevalent idea of a coming "Zosiosh," or Saviour, which made the Wise Men look for the star, the persistent notion current among the Jews of a coming Messiah, were all "pointers" pointing to a great event which was to come.

The event itself.

That this great event actually happened is a fact of Roman history. As I mentioned during the Mission, it was a great relief to me in the midst of my youthful doubts to find that Tacitus actually mentions the death of Jesus Christ in his annals. "*Jesus Christ*," he says, "*was put*

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

to death in the reign of Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was Procurator of Judea!" And Suetonius, in Roman history, speaks of a tumult having arisen, "Chresto impulsore," i.e. "Chresto" being the stirrer-up of it—a natural mistake for a Roman historian when he witnessed an attack on Christians. The great event, then, of the whole world's history took place on a certain date at a certain spot, and the idea of Christianity being a sun-myth, as taught in Victoria Park in the old days by the secularist lecturers, is swept into the dust-bin of discredited theories.

The Character that appeared.

It was not so much to be noted that Someone appeared; it was the character of that Someone which did appear which was so important. This character has been subject to the scrutiny of generations of men for two thousand years, and has well stood the scrutiny. The following are well-known quotations, but nothing can better them, as they come from such unexpected quarters.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

It was not some fervent Christian, but the sceptic, John Stuart Mill, who said to the young men of his day, "Live so that Jesus Christ would approve of your life." It was not a bishop or a Christian father, but Lecky, the author of the *History of Rationalism*, who wrote, "The record of those three short years have done more to regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the plans of statesmen." Jesus Christ, then, is a unique figure Who stands upon the plains of history to-day dwarfing all the puny race of men which stands around Him. The greatest and the best who have lived since then have attributed to Him what grace of character or particular virtue they may seem to have possessed.

What did He say about Himself?

We turn, then, naturally with the greatest interest to see what He said about Himself, and we are drawn at once by the fact that while He was the model of humility and self-effacement in every way, His assertions about Himself were simply

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

astounding. It is commonly thought that they are only reported in St. John's Gospel, and it is true that the most forcible do occur there, as, for instance, "I am the Light of the world," "I am the Bread of Life," "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," "Before Abraham was, I AM." But in St. Matthew's Gospel claims, which when pushed to their conclusion involve as much as this, also occur. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him," "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It has been often pointed out, and nowhere more forcibly than in Dr. Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, that these claims are inconsistent with anything which can be called humility unless they were true.

Why should they not be true?

It is often pointed out that when we cannot believe things it is more often due to a lack of imagination than to anything else. We are so tied and bound by the petty details of everyday life

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

that our imagination cannot expand to take in a really big thing. Now, this really big thing is that God resolved to reveal Himself in an intelligible and human form to man, and actually did so. And I ask again, Why not? That is why in the opening sermon of the Mission and also in St. Paul's Cathedral on Easter Day I quoted the wonderful opening verses of St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God." And then in verse 14 of the first chapter, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." A character like that of Jesus Christ is just what we should expect, if the Word of God did come and dwell among us; and instead of being afraid to believe it, and making difficulties about it, we ought to be on our knees thanking God for this wonderful revelation of His character. Away for ever with all these false notions about His hardness, and His jealousy, and His arbitrariness. If it is true that "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," then let us thank God that He is the

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

loving, kind, self-sacrificing Person that Jesus Christ was. Then God may indeed say, as He is represented as saying in "The Hound of Heaven"¹:

"Thou dravest love from Me
Who dravest Me!"

Where the miracles came in.

That brings us to the most controversial question of the present day—Where do the miracles come in? Many people think that we believe in the Incarnation because of the miracles. As a matter of fact, it is the other way round—we *believe in the miracles because of the Incarnation*. It is the moral argument which really convinces. It is the impossibility of such a One as Jesus Christ being either a deceiver or deceived which carries the day; but when once one has believed in the Incarnation, then the miracles become probable; not as breaches of law, but as worked by some higher law, which such a One would be likely to know. I have enlarged upon this in the

¹ Francis Thompson.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

Mission, and will not repeat again what I have said already, but I confess that the modern miracle of the wireless appeals greatly to me. The fact that when speaking in quiet tones in Savoy Hill in London the voice rings through Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland is a miracle, but it is according to law. That law, however, was unknown twenty-five years ago; it ought therefore to be no difficulty to our faith that one who (*ex hypothesi*) was the Eternal Word should speak in tones and work through acts which are in accordance with the heavenly law which He knows, and which we may know some day ourselves. Anyhow, the story hangs together, and, as I have said in the Mission, miracles which would be incredible in a mere man, however good, become consonant with the story of the Word made flesh which dwelt among us. They are told quite naturally, and in the simplest manner, and are knit up with the discourses. Take away the miracles, and half the discourses are left "in the air," as, for instance, notably the dis-

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

course on the Bread of Life which springs from the feeding of the five thousand.

The Resurrection natural.

The whole question of the possibility of the miracles centres round the Resurrection. And here I would refer back to the closing sermon of the Mission in St. Paul's Cathedral: *Ought* it not to have happened? Certainly it ought, if Christ was what we have reason to believe Him to be. God could not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption—and therefore we need not be surprised that He did not.

The empty Tomb essential to the Resurrection.

Here I would say that, contrary to some who write upon the Resurrection to-day, I look upon the empty tomb as an essential feature of the Resurrection story. The Scriptural account of the Resurrection is far more than an account of a ghost-like appearance of Jesus Christ after death. St. John "saw and believed" when he

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

looked into the tomb, because he saw that while the clothes were left, and the napkin which was about His head was lying in a place by itself, the tomb was empty. In the great Easter Preface we proclaim in the Prayer Book that Christ by His death has destroyed death, and by His rising to life again has restored to us everlasting life. What the nature of His Resurrection Body was we shall never know, but it clearly was the same Body which lay in the tomb, glorified and transfigured, which convinced even St. Thomas of its reality, and was seen by five hundred people in broad daylight on a mountain.

Why Jesus Christ had to die.

The really difficult question is why Jesus Christ had to die, but I tried to explain that at Stoke Newington on the Wednesday in Holy Week, and I would refer my readers to what I said then, only adding that these great things are really beyond us. I do not think that we can expect to understand them. It is, however, surely not incredible that

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

One Who in His love had made Himself one with us should be able to save us by His life and death. God looks upon us clearly as a *family*; our lives are knit up with one another. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." We can injure one another. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children. Why, then, is it incredible that the virtue of the Elder Brother should avail for the younger brothers and sisters who plead His Name? Anyhow, it seems revealed that it is so by Christ Himself. "The Son of man came," He says, "to give His life a ransom for many." St. Paul over and over again speaks of having peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There seems, then, nothing incredible in this blessed truth, that *we can be forgiven*. Although it is altogether a mistake to speak of the forgiveness of sin as the whole Gospel to the exclusion of the equally blessed truth of the reality of grace and the help of the Sacraments and the fellowship of the Church, yet we ought to realize that as a beginning of the Christian life we must

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

hear the words addressed to St. Paul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."

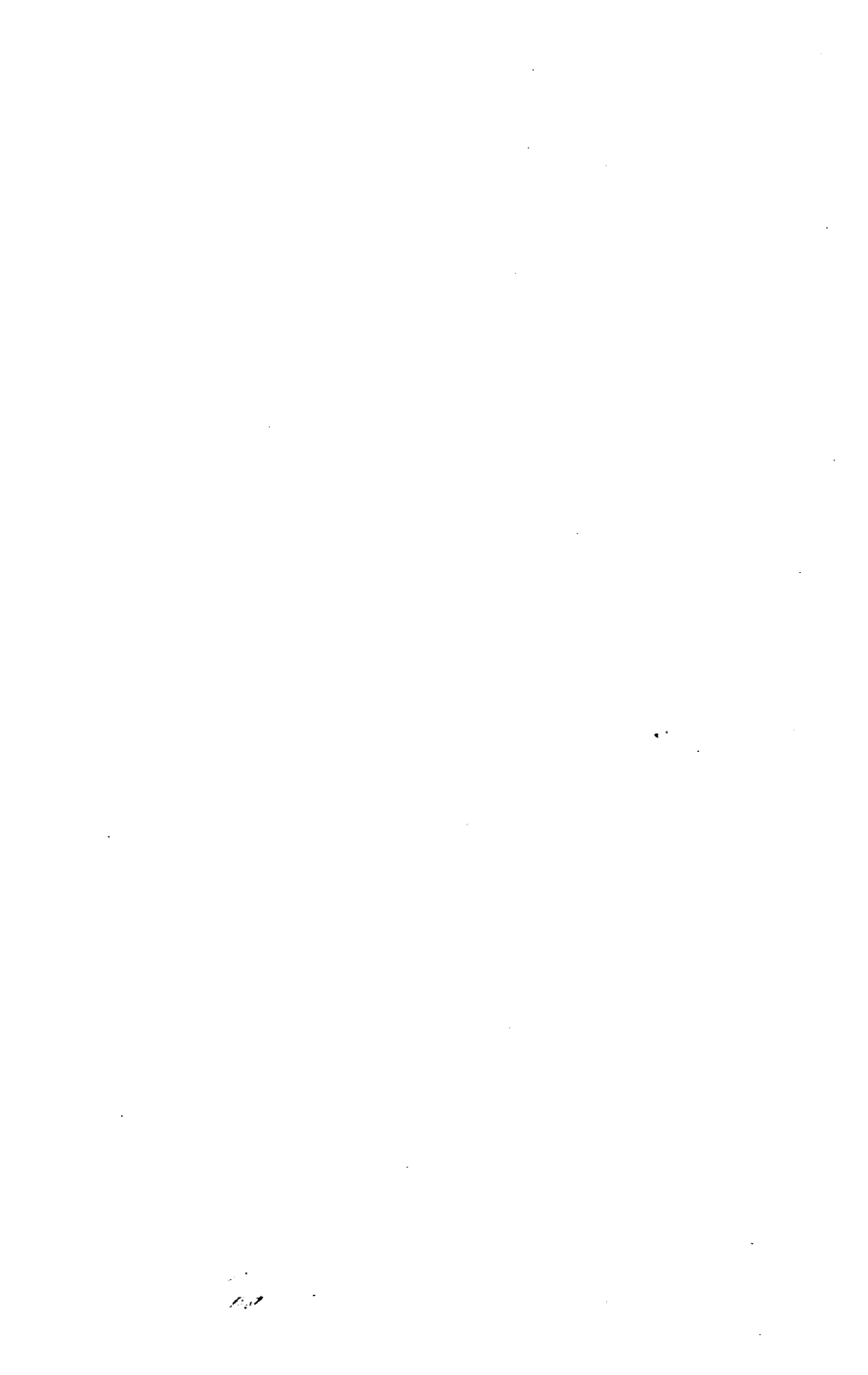
The power of Christ in the world to-day.

There yet remains as a final reason, Why am I a Christian?, the immense effect to-day of the Gospel in action. It is its own witness. I do not want to repeat again what I said in the Mission about the powerlessness of Confucianism in China, and Buddhism in Japan, and Hinduism in India, and Mohammedanism in Morocco to break down superstition and fear and let the oppressed go free—I would refer my readers to the sermon which dealt with this subject; but undoubtedly it is a literal fact that there is no other Name under Heaven given among men by which the world is being at present uplifted and purified, except the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Chinese Christian feels that he is no longer being pursued by the devil. The Japanese Christian has hope of something more than *Nirvana*, the Hindu Christian has a power to keep him pure,

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN?

the Mohammedan who has become a Christian has a new view about the sanctity of married life and the purity of women.

Why am I a Christian, then? Because I believe that I have caught a vision of an eternal purpose of God, of a Gospel which Bishop Westcott calls the Gospel of Creation, and because in the New Testament I see that purpose worked out in all its detailed glory, because at the foot of the Cross I can receive forgiveness for my sins, and in the sacramental communion with the Risen Christ I can also receive new power for my work. And, lastly, because as I lay my dear ones to rest I can look forward with certainty to that day when this happy life is over, and I shall lie down to rest myself, that both for them and for myself I have the pledge from One Who has conquered death that they and I may meet in a land where there is no more parting, and where we may go on serving and loving for ever the same God Whom we served and loved on earth.



2- 12455

BX
5133
W8 W6
1929

Winnington Ingram
Why am I a Christian?

890008

MAR 5 1930

MAR 18 1930

MAR 18 1930

JUN 19 1930

J. N. Roebuck
6517 University

2- 12455

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



48 450 848